# The Ideal Muslim

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# The Muslim Ideal




## The True Islamic Personality

**As Defined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah**

شخصية المسلم كما يصوغها الإسلام

**في الكتاب والسنة**

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# Publisher's Note

All Praise is for Allāh (ﷻ), *Rabb* (Lord) of the worlds and peace and prayers be upon Muhammad (ﷺ), his family and companions and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day.

The 'Ideal Muslim' is now in its second revised edition in English. Like the 'Ideal Muslimah,' it has been very well received by our English and Arabic readers. Its popularity is based on the fact that Dr. al-Hāshimī has dealt with the various topics in a complete and comprehensive way. He has brought conclusive references from the Qur'ān and Sunnah to back up every point and issue he has raised. He has even examined both Eastern and Western thoughts on certain issues and proved that the Islāmic ideal is superior in all cases.

Indeed, the Ideal Muslim has no comparison. His humanity glows in every aspect of his life. He is a man of high moral character in his dealings with his parents, family, friends and the society at large.

This revised edition has been done to upgrade and correct any mistakes in the first edition. I.I.P.H. is determined to bring the true knowledge of Islām to its readers in the most authentic form in accordance with the pure teachings of the religion.

This book will indeed benefit all those who sincerely seek the authentic knowledge of Islām. We pray and hope that we all receive benefit from it and that we may be able to follow the example of our pious predecessors in practicing this knowledge. And may Allāh's peace and blessings be upon the Prophet (ﷺ), his family and companions.

*The Ideal Muslim is a man of the highest moral character. In his relationship with His Rabb, himself, family, parents, relatives, friends and the community at large, he has a most excellent example in the Prophet of Islām. This ideal is further strengthened by the characters of the first generations of Muslims who excelled in all the various fields of human endeavour. He is reassured from the teachings of Islām that he also can reach these noble heights by working to improve his character daily.*

*This comprehensive work by Dr. al-Hāshimī is a valuable contribution for our English readers. He wrote another book on the Ideal Muslimah (female Muslim) and our readers are invited to read both titles for the reason that these two books complement each other. May Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) help us all in making these pure teachings a part of our life.*

*The Other Title in this Series is:*

- *The Ideal Muslimah*

# Translator's Foreword

Praise be to Allāh (ﷻ), the *Rabb* (Lord) of the Worlds, and may the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad and his Family and Companions.

Ideal Muslim: the true Islāmic personality as defined by the Qur'ān and Sunnah presents a comprehensive overview of the way in which the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions lived. This picture of the practical aspects of a truly Islāmic life-style serves as a timely reminder for all of us. At a time when unIslāmic and antiIslāmic influences are spreading, via modern technology, to the heart-lands of Islām and even to the remotest regions, we need to hold firm to the distinct character of our faith, as prescribed by Allāh (ﷻ) and revealed through His Prophet (ﷺ).

Dr. Muhammad 'Alī al-Hāshimī presents a well-thought out guide to the Islāmic life-style. He starts with the Muslim's relationship with his *Rabb*, which is the most important aspect of his life, and provides the foundation for all his other relationships. From there, Dr. Hāshimī outlines how the Muslim should relate to every person in his life, starting with himself and his family, and moving on, by stages, to encompass every member of the community or society. Each point is supported by extensive quotations from the Qur'ān and/or Ḥadīth.

It should be noted that while most of Islāmic teachings — and certainly the central beliefs and practices ("pillars") — are incumbent upon men and women alike, some aspects of the faith are emphasized more for one than the other, or may be applicable to just one of the two sexes. An obvious example is the dress-code, where the emphasis is placed on women's attire, although it should not be forgotten that men are instructed to dress modestly too, and that certain prohibitions apply only to them (i.e., the wearing of gold and silk). A number of these "gender-specific" matters are discussed here, but the book should not be viewed as exclusive: men and women alike may learn much from it.

The interpretations of Qur'ānic quotations have been taken from the translation by Yusuf 'Alī, except where indicated. The archaic style of Yusuf 'Alī's translation has here been amended and modernized, so that "thou" becomes "you," "goeth" becomes "goes," etc.

Many Islāmic concepts are difficult to express in English, especially as words that carry extensive cultural baggage. This is especially so with "religious" words which when rendered into English may convey connotations that do not exist in Arabic. For this reason, many Arabic words have been retained, with explanations either in the text or in the glossary which is to be found at the end of the book.

May Allāh (ﷻ) reward the author for his efforts to educate the Muslims about their religion; may He cause this book to be a source of beneficial instruction; and may He guide us and keep us on the Straight Path.

Naṣiruddīn al-Khaṭṭāb

March 1997

***In the name of Allāh, All-Compassionate, All-Merciful***

*O Allāh, to You I offer praise and seek Your help and guidance. I send prayers and blessings upon your trustworthy Messenger and all his family and companions, and those who follow them in (all good deeds) until the Day of Judgement.*

# Introduction

My interest in the topic of the Muslim personality, as Islām meant it to be, goes back more than ten years, during which time I have noticed that many Muslims are often overzealous in some matters but negligent in others. For example, you might see a Muslim who insists on attending every prayer and standing in the front row, but he pays no heed to the bad smell emanating from his mouth or clothes; or he obeys and fears Allāh (ﷻ), but does not take care to uphold the ties of kinship; or he devotes much time to worship and the pursuit of knowledge, but is neglecting his children's upbringing and does not know what they are reading or who their friends are; or he is taking good care of his children but is mistreating his parents; or he is looking after his parents but abusing his wife; or he is treating his wife and children with respect but is disturbing his neighbours; or he is paying attention to his own private affairs but ignoring his friends and the welfare of the Muslim community at large; or he is religious and pious, but heedless of the Islāmic teachings regarding giving *salām*, consuming food and drink, and interacting with people.

It is strange that these shortcomings exist among some of those who are regarded as playing an active role in Islāmic *da'wah* and who are involved in the propagation of a practical message that, in most cases, provides an awareness and understanding of Islāmic teachings and values, following true guidance. Yet it seems that the overwhelming nature of their work, or perhaps carelessness or forgetfulness, has caused some Islāmists to fall into the trap of these errors, whether knowingly or otherwise.

My interest in exploring the Muslim personality as Islām meant it to be, led me to consult Islāmic sources that refer to man and how he is to be guided and moulded, so that I could present to the Muslims, especially those who are practising and active, a complete study of this personality, describing its distinguishing features and attitudes. It is hoped that this work may represent a beacon of guidance to those who are falling short in some respects, so that they may raise themselves up to the level that their true religion intended.

I was shocked when I realized how great a gap exists between what Islām wants for the Muslims and what they want for themselves — except a few of them who are sincere in their faith, pure of heart and soul, and filled with ambition. These are the ones who are passionately devoted to their religion, drinking deeply from its pure spring and following its illustrious guidance more closely each day.

Whoever takes the time to study the guidance of Allāh (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ), consulting the proper sources, i.e., the texts in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, will be amazed at how much comprehensive information is to be found there, dealing with both major and minor aspects of the individual's relationship with his *Rabb*, his own self, and the people around him. All of this is guidance aimed at the edification of the Muslim and enabling him to enjoy an ideal life both as an individual and as a member of the larger society.

So it seems that the Muslim, as intended by these texts, is supposed to be a decent, social person, whom this unique combination of honourable characteristics distinguishes. These features are described in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, which present them as a religious obligation to be actively pursued by man in the hope of receiving reward from Allāh (ﷻ).

So I began to compile and classify references from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. As I gathered more material, the subject became clearer and I was able to identify the following topics:

1. The Muslim and his *Rabb*
2. The Muslim and his own self
3. The Muslim and his parents
4. The Muslim and his wife
5. The Muslim and his children
6. The Muslim and his relatives
7. The Muslim and his neighbour
8. The Muslim and his Muslim brothers and friends
9. The Muslim and his community/society

Through studying the wealth of knowledge contained in these sources, I realized the greatness of Allāh's mercy to His slaves, in that He has rescued them from error and sent them true guidance via His Messengers, Books and Laws, so that mankind may be shown the Straight Path and saved from stumbling and groping blindly in the dark.

Human beings are in great need of this guidance and education, so that they will be able to practise their humanity and play the role in this life that Allāh (ﷻ) intended them to play. Had it not for this Divine guidance, mankind would have been left wallowing in the mire of selfishness, hatred, domination and oppression.

The evidence for this is apparent in the behaviour of the child, who strives to show his parents that he is better than his brother and seeks to deny that his brother has any of the same decent qualities to which he himself aspires. His natural inclination is to defeat his brother and prove that he is better.

This natural characteristic is essential to man's well-being, so long as it is moderate and is held in check. This inclination to prove himself motivates him to seek the best in himself: the great satisfaction he derives from realizing the good qualities he possesses encourages him to try even harder and achieve even greater things. But if this desire to prove oneself is exaggerated and allowed to get out of hand, it becomes a loathsome, dangerous illness which makes a person arrogant and boastful, treating his peers with disdain, although he is the farthest removed from the qualities he claims to possess. Here we can see the value of religion and education in controlling this sickness, reducing his self-admiration and pointing the way towards moderation, wisdom and humility.

Islām is the well-spring of all decency and honour in this life, and of the sound educational and moral principles, high values and good behaviour that have come down to us through the centuries from that pure, divine source.

Human beings are clearly more inclined towards looseness and ignorance than to seeking to adhere to that which is right, because it is easier to fall down than to lift oneself up, and to be lax than to follow the rules. So man needs a deterrent to warn him every time he forgets and his foot slips from the Straight Path. So thinkers and writers have a duty to explain these noble values and present them in an easily-understood and attractive fashion so that people will be able to develop the values and attitudes which Allāh (ﷻ) intended for them, thus enabling them to enjoy a decent and pleasant life.

Allāh (ﷻ) did not reveal this religion of Islām from above the seven heavens just for it to be the matter of theoretical discussions or sacred words through the recitation of which people might seek blessings without understanding their significance. Allāh (ﷻ) revealed this religion to govern the life of the individual, the family and the society at large, to be a beacon that would lead the people out of darkness into light:

﴾"There have come to you from Allāh a [new] light and a perspicuous Book — wherewith Allāh guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light – guides them to a Path that is Straight."﴿ (Qur'an 5:15-16)

In the shade of this guidance, life becomes better, more pleasant and enjoyable. The first step towards this life of guidance and light involves the formation of a sincere Muslim individual who will present a vivid and beautiful picture of Islām, so that when people see him they will see true Islām, and when they deal with him their faith will increase.

This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) did at the beginning of his *da'wah*, when his first step on the long road of Islām was to mould individuals who would embody Islām and become as it were "Qur'āns" walking on the face of the earth. Wherever they went in the world, they were a unique example of a unique way of life. When people saw this unique way of life embodied in sincere, believing individuals, they embraced this religion and entered Islām in crowds.

Humanity today, and the Muslims in particular, are in great need of such unique individuals without whom human life is unbearable, decent values cannot be upheld, and the true light of Islām cannot shine forth.

What does such a marvellous human example look like? This is the question that will be answered in the following pages.

I ask Allāh (ﷻ) to accept this work for His sake, and to benefit others through it and make it a help for me on ﴾"the Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he [will prosper] that brings to Allāh a sound heart."﴿ (Qur'ān 26:88-89)

Muhammad 'Alī al-Hāshimī
Riyadh
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1 May 1981 CE

# Chapter 1

## *The Muslim and His* Rabb

### The believer is alert

Islām requires of the Muslim, first and foremost, that he be a true and sincere believer in Allāh (ﷻ) 'The Exalted,' closely connected to Him, constantly remembering Him and putting his trust in Him, while making the effort to help himself. The Muslim should feel in the depths of his soul that he is in constant need of the help and support of Allāh (ﷻ), no matter how much he may think he can do for himself.

The true and sincere Muslim is alert and open-minded to the magnificence of Allāh's creation. He knows that it is Almighty Allāh (ﷻ) Who is in control of the affairs of the universe and of mankind. He recognizes the signs of His unlimited power in every aspect of creation, and so his faith in Allāh (ﷻ) increases, he remembers Him constantly and puts his trust in Him:

﴾Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day — there are indeed Signs for men of understanding — men who celebrate the praises of Allāh, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the [wonders of] creation in the heavens and the earth, [with the thought]: 'Our *Rabb!* Not for naught have You created [all] this! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the Penalty of the Fire.'﴿ (Qur'ān 3:190-191)

### Obedient to the commands of his *Rabb*

It comes as no surprise, then, that the sincere Muslim is humbly obedient to Allāh (ﷻ) in all matters. He never transgresses the limits, and he follows Allāh's commands and guidance even when they are contrary to his own desires. The test of the Muslim's faith lies in this following of the commands of Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) in all matters, great and small, with no hesitation or reservation:

"None of you [truly] believes until his inclination is in accordance with what I have brought."[1]

﴾But no, by the *Rabb*, they can have no [real] Faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.﴿ (Qur'ān 4:65)

It is the matter of absolute submission and complete obedience to Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger. Without both of these, there is no faith and no Islām. Therefore the sincere Muslim does not deviate from the guidance of Allāh (ﷻ) or ignore the commands of His Messenger, whether these concern him as an

[1] Al-Nawawi's *Forty Ḥadīth*, Ḥadīth No. 41 (p. 124).

individual or those over whom he has authority and for whom he is responsible (i.e., the members of his family).

## He has a sense of responsibility for those under his authority

If any member of the Muslim's family is neglectful or failing in his or her duties towards Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger, then he is responsible:

"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock (i.e., those over whom you have authority)." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The sense of responsibility that the sincere Muslim feels when a member of his family is failing in some important regard disturbs him greatly. He cannot bear it, so he will hasten to deal with its causes despite the consequences. The only one who can ignore such a responsibility and keep quiet about it is the man whose faith is weak and whose manhood is lacking.

## He accepts the will and decree of Allāh (ﷻ)

The sincere Muslim is always content to accept the will and decree of Allāh (ﷻ), remembering the ḥadīth:

"How amazing is the affair of the Muslim! His affairs are all good. If he experiences ease, he is grateful, and that is good for him. If he experiences hardship, he faces it with patience and perseverance, and that is also good for him." (Bukhārī)

The sincere Muslim is convinced that belief in the will and decree of Allāh (ﷻ) is one of the pillars of faith. Whatever befalls him in life cannot have been avoided, because Allāh (ﷻ) has decreed it. His acceptance of the divine will and decree will earn him a great reward from Allāh (ﷻ), Who will count him as one of the successful, obedient believers.

This is why the ḥadīth says that the Muslim's affairs are all good. If he goes through a time of ease, he will give much thanks to his generous *Rabb* for His bounty, and if he goes through a time of hardship he will bear it with patience and fortitude, following the commands of his *Rabb* and accepting His will and decree. Whatever the case, it is truly good for him.

## The one who turns to Allāh (ﷻ) in repentance

The Muslim may find himself becoming neglectful and slipping from the Straight Path, so that he may commit a sin which does not befit him as a humble and vigilant believer, but he will soon remember his *Rabb*, turn away from his error and seek forgiveness for his failings:

﴾Those who fear Allāh, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allāh to remembrance when lo! They see [aright]!﴿ (Qur'ān 7: 201)

The heart filled with love and fear of Allāh (ﷻ) will not be overcome by negligence. It is those who ignore Allāh's commands and guidance who will be led astray. The heart of the sincere Muslim is ever eager to repent and seek forgiveness, and rejoices in obedience, guidance and the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ).

## His main concern is the pleasure of his *Rabb*

The sincere Muslim seeks to earn the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ) in everything that he does. He is not concerned with seeking the approval of others, and indeed he may incur the wrath and hatred of people in the course of his efforts to win divine favour, as the Prophet (ﷺ)'Blessings and Peace be upon him' said:

"Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ) at the risk of displeasing the people, Allāh (ﷻ) will take care of him and protect him from them. But whoever seeks the pleasure of the people at the risk of angering Allāh (ﷻ), Allāh (ﷻ) will abandon him to the care of the people."[1]

Consequently, he measures all his deeds against his desire to attain the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ), and will retain or discard any practice accordingly. Thus the Muslim will have appropriate standards, and the Straight Path will be clearly signposted for him. He will avoid falling into ridiculous contradictions whereby he obeys Allāh (ﷻ) in one matter and disobeys Him in another, or he regards something as *ḥalāl* one year and *ḥarām* the next. There is no room for contradictions as long as the standards are correct and the principles are sound.

One often notices people who pray devotedly in the mosque, then when one sees them in the marketplace, they are dealing with *ribā* (usury or interest), or if one sees them in the home, the street, the school or the neighbourhood, it is apparent that they are not applying the laws of Allāh (ﷻ) to their own selves, their wives, their children or any of those under their care. These people are afflicted by a severe misunderstanding of the reality of Islām, this holistic religion that in all affairs directs the Muslim towards a greater purpose, namely the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ), may He be glorified. This greater purpose leads the Muslim to measure all his deeds against the standards laid down by Allāh (ﷻ). So these people would appear to be "semi-Muslims": they are Muslims in name only. This split personality is one of the greatest dangers that Muslims are currently facing.

## He regularly performs the duties and good deeds required by Islām

The sincere Muslim performs all obligatory deeds and adheres to the pillars of Islām, completely and devotedly. He does not slacken, do it halfheartedly or seek excuses not to do it. So he establishes prayer, performing each of the five daily prayers on time, for prayer is the pillar of the faith — whoever establishes prayer establishes faith, and whoever neglects prayer destroys the faith.[1]

Prayer is the best of deeds, as is made clear in the ḥadīth narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) 'May Allāh be pleased with him' in which he said:

"I asked the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ): 'What deed is most loved by Allāh (ﷻ)?' He said, 'To offer each prayer as soon as it is due.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Treating one's parents with honour and respect.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Jihād for the sake of Alāh (ﷻ).'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Prayer is so important because it is a direct link between the servant and his *Rabb*, in which he distances himself from the concerns of daily life and focuses himself entirely on his *Rabb*, asking Him for help, guidance and perseverance to continue along the Straight Path. So it is hardly surprising that prayer is considered to be the best of deeds, because it is the source from which the believer may replenish his *taqwā* and the spring in whose pure water he may cleanse himself of his sins.

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, al-Qaḍā'ī and Ibn 'Asākir. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

[1] See *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 1/147

Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) said:

"I heard the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) say: 'What would you think if there were a river running by the door of any of you, and he bathed in it five times every day, would any trace of dirt be left on him?' The people said, 'There would be no trace of dirt on him.' He said: 'This is like the five daily prayers, through which Allāh (ﷻ) erases sin.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Jābir (ﷺ) said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: 'The five daily prayers are like a deep river flowing by the door of any of you, in which he bathes five times each day.'" (Muslim)

Ibn Mas'ūd (ﷺ) said:

"A man kissed a woman, then he came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and told him what he had done. Then Allāh (ﷻ) revealed the *Āyah*: ﴾'And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: for those things that are good remove those that are evil . . .'﴿ (Qur'ān 11:114). The man said, 'Does it apply to me?' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'It applies to all of my Ummah.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: 'The five daily prayers, from Friday to Friday, are an expiation for the sins committed in the time between prayers, so long as no major sins (*kabā'ir*) are committed.'" (Muslim)

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (ﷺ) said:

"I heard the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saying: 'There is no Muslim who, when the times for prayer comes, performs *wuḍū'* properly, concentrates on his prayer and bows correctly, but the prayer will be an expiation for the sins committed prior to it, so long as no major sin has been committed. This is the case until the end of time.'" (Muslim)

The ḥadīths and reports that extol the virtues of prayer and describe its importance and benefits are many. It is not possible to quote all of them here.

The devout Muslim tries to pray in the first *jamā'ah* (congregation) in the mosque whenever he can, because the Prophet (ﷺ) told us that "prayer offered in *jamā'ah* is twenty-seven times better than prayer offered individually." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said that the Muslim,

"If he performs *wuḍū'* properly, then goes out with the sole intention of going to pray in the mosque, then for each step he takes, his status in Paradise will be raised by one degree, and one of his sins will be forgiven.[1] When he prays, as long as he remains in his place of prayer and his *wuḍū'* does not become invalidated, the angels will continue to pray for him: 'O Allāh (ﷻ), bless him, O Allāh (ﷻ), have mercy on

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[1] For this reason, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (ﷺ) used to take short strides when he went to the mosque, in order to increase the number of steps he took, so that his reward would be increased accordingly.

him.' He is regarded as being in a state of prayer so long as he is waiting for the prayer." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) spoke of the promise of Paradise for the one who is keen to pray in congregation in the mosque morning and evening:

"Allāh will prepare a place in Paradise for the one who goes to the mosque in the morning or in the evening, each time he goes to the mosque." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Consequently, the *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet), may Allāh be pleased with them, were always eager to attend prayers in congregation. Referring to this, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) said:

"Whoever aspires to meet Allāh (ﷻ) as a Muslim, let him uphold the habit of attending prayers whenever the call to prayer is given. Allāh (ﷻ) has shown your Prophet (ﷺ) the way of guidance, and these prayers (in the mosque) are part of that way. If you pray in your homes like this man who stayed in his home, then you have abandoned the Sunnah of your Prophet, and if you have abandoned the Sunnah of your Prophet, then you have gone astray. There was a time when the only type of person who would stay at home at the time of prayer was the one who was known to be a hypocrite. At that time, a man would be brought supported[1] by two others, until he stood in the row of worshippers." (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) was so concerned that people should attend the congregational prayers in the mosque that he wanted to burn down the houses of those who failed to join the congregation:

"By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I wanted to give orders that wood should be gathered and brought to me, then I would have ordered the call to prayer to be given, and would have appointed a man to lead the prayer, then I would have gone to the ones who were absent from the congregation and burnt their houses down around them." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

It comes as no surprise, then, to learn of Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, who in thirty years never saw the back of another man in the mosque, because he was always in the first row before the *adhān* (call to prayer). There are many such examples in the history of Islām.

Distance was no object for the *Ṣaḥābah*, who would attend the mosque whenever they heard the call to prayer, no matter how far their homes were from the mosque. The congregational prayer was so dear to them that they would even rejoice in the distance between their homes and the mosque, because each step they took to reach it would be recorded among the good deeds for which they would be rewarded.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b (رضي الله عنه) said:

"There was a man of the Anṣār whose house was farther from the mosque than anyone else I knew, but he never missed a prayer! Someone asked him, 'Why do you not buy a donkey to ride when it is dark or it is very hot?' He said, 'I would not like my house to be next to the mosque, because I want my walking to the mosque then back home to my family to be recorded among my good deeds.' The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: 'Allāh (ﷻ) has given all of that to you as a reward.'" (Muslim)

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[1] This is referring to physical weakness or sickness, which did not prevent a person from attending the prayer in the mosque. (Author)

The Prophet (ﷺ) advised those *Ṣaḥābah* whose homes were far from the mosques not to move to houses that were nearer. He reassured them that their efforts to reach the mosque would be recorded among their good deeds, and that their many steps would not go to waste. Jābir (ﷺ) said:

"Some areas around the mosque became vacant, so Banū Salamah wanted to move there. When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard about it, he told them, 'I have heard that you want to move near the mosque.' They said, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allāh, that is what we wanted to do.' He said, 'O Banū Salamah, stay where you are, so that your efforts to reach the mosque will be recorded among your good deeds.' They said, 'We would not like to have moved.'" (Muslim)

Abū Mūsā (ﷺ) said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: 'The one who will receive the greatest reward for his prayer is the one who has come the farthest distance, and the one who waits to pray with the *imām* will receive a greater reward than the one who prays, then goes to sleep.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Believers are particularly encouraged, in several ḥadīths, to attend the congregational prayers in the morning and in the evening. The Prophet (ﷺ) explained that there is a great reward for those who attend the mosque for these two prayers (*fajr* and '*ishā*'). It will suffice here to quote just two of these reports:

(1)'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (ﷺ) said: "I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: 'Whoever prays '*ishā*' in congregation, it is as if he stayed up half the night in prayer, and whoever prayed *fajr* in congregation, it is as if he spent the entire night in prayer.'" (Muslim)

(2)Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) said: "The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: "No prayer is a greater burden on the *munāfiqūn* (hypocrites) than *fajr* and '*ishā*'. If they knew how much (blessing and reward) there is in them, they would come even if they had to crawl.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The devout Muslim who is keen to succeed in the Hereafter will not hesitate to perform as many *nāfil* (supererogatory) deeds as he can, night and day, because performing many *nāfil* deeds brings the servant closer to his *Rabb*, and includes him among those who receive His divine help, as is referred to in the *ḥadīth qudsī* (sacred):

". . . My slave continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I will love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (something) of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it." (Bukhārī)

Because of Allāh's love for His slave, the person will be loved by the inhabitants of heaven and earth, as is described in a report narrated by Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ), in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"When Allāh (ﷻ) loves one of His servants, he calls Jibrīl (ﷺ) 'May Peace be upon him' and tells him: 'I love so-and-so, so love him.' Then Jibrīl (ﷺ) will love him, and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven: 'Allāh (ﷻ) loves so-and-so, so love him.' So the inhabitants of heaven will love him too, and he will be well

[1] Bukhārī reported a similar account from Anas.

accepted by the inhabitants of the earth. If Allāh (ﷻ) hates one of His servants, He calls Jibrīl (ﷺ) and tells him: 'I hate so-and-so, so hate him.' Then Jibrīl (ﷺ) will hate him and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven, 'Allāh (ﷻ) hates so-and-so, so hate him.' Then the inhabitants of heaven will hate him, and he will also be detested by the inhabitants of the earth." (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to stay up at night in prayer, standing until his feet were swollen. 'Ā'ishah 'May Allāh be pleased with her' asked him: "Why are you doing this, O Messenger of Allāh, when Allāh (ﷻ) has forgiven all your sins, past and future?" He replied, "Should I not be a grateful slave?" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The true Muslim tries to perform all his prayers perfectly. It is not merely the matter of going through the motions when the heart is empty and the mind is wandering.

When he has completed his prayer, the Muslim does not rush straight back into the hustle and bustle of daily life. Instead, he seeks forgiveness from Allāh (ﷻ), and praises and glorifies Him in the manner prescribed in the Sunnah. Then he turns to Almighty Allāh (ﷻ) in humble supplication, asking Him to guide him and to grant him the goodness of this world and the next. Thus, prayer plays its role in the purification of the heart and soul. For these reasons, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say: "The source of my deepest satisfaction is prayer." [1]

Those who pray sincerely and humbly are under the care and protection of Allāh (ﷻ), so they do not fear when evil approaches, neither do they become miserly when something good befalls them:

﴿Truly man was created very impatient — fretful when evil touches him: and niggardly when good reaches him — Not so those devoted to Prayer . . . ﴾ (Qur'ān 70:19-22)

The true Muslim also pays *zakāh*, if he has enough wealth. He calculates the amount due, precisely and honestly, and pays it in a manner that is in accordance with the requirements of Islām. Even if he has to pay thousands or millions in *zakāh*, he would never think of an excuse not to do so.

This is because *zakāh* is a clearly-defined financial obligation that is also an act of worship. The sincere Muslim cannot afford to fail in this duty, which is prescribed by the Sharī'ah. The Muslim who hesitates to pay it is lacking in his religion and has a miserly and twisted attitude. It suffices to note that it is permitted to fight the one who withholds payment of *zakāh*, even to the point of killing him, until or unless he fulfils his obligation. The words of Abū Bakr (ﷺ) concerning the apostates[2] echo down the centuries to us, reminding us of the connection that Islām makes between "religious" and "worldly" affairs: "I will fight whoever separates *ṣalāh* from *zakāh*." This declaration of Abū Bakr (ﷺ) indicates that he had a sound understanding of the nature of this comprehensive, holistic religion, and of the close connection between *ṣalāh* and *zakāh*, as he had seen the *Āyāt* of the Qur'ān revealed one after the other and emphasizing the connection between *ṣalāh* and *zakāh*:

﴿. . . those who establish regular prayer and regular charity . . . ﴾ (Qur'ān 5:55)

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī, with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2] Apostates: following the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), numerous Arabian tribes who had embraced Islām renounced the faith and rebelled. In particular, they refused to pay *zakāh*, although it was one of the central duties of the religion they had sworn to follow. Abū Bakr (ﷺ), as *khalīfah*, was responsible for bringing them back into Islām, and restoring order and stability to the Islāmic state. [Translator]

﴾And be steadfast in prayer: practise regular charity.﴿ (Qur'ān 2:43)

﴾. . . [those who] . . . establish regular prayers and regular charity . . . ﴿ (Qur'ān 2:277)

The true Muslim fasts in Ramaḍān with the sincere intention of earning reward, and with his heart full of faith: "Whoever fasts Ramaḍān out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

He knows that the obligation to fast includes guarding his tongue, his sight, and all of his other faculties, so as to avoid committing any error which may invalidate his fast or cancel out his reward:

"When any of you is fasting, he should not utter foul words or raise his voice in anger. If then anyone provokes or fights him, he should say, 'I am observing a fast.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

"Whoever does not give up false speech and evil actions, Allāh has no need of his giving up his food and drink." (Bukhārī)

The fasting Muslim is constantly aware that this is a month unlike any other: it is the month of fasting for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), and the reward of Allāh (ﷻ), the All-Bountiful and All-Munificent, is greatest and vastest than anyone could ever imagine:

"The reward for every good deed of the sons of Ādam will be multiplied anywhere between ten and seven hundred times. Allāh said: 'Except for fasting, because it is for Me and I Myself will give recompense for it. He gives up his food and his passion for Me.' For the one who fasts, there are two times of rejoicing, one when he breaks his fast, and one when he meets his *Rabb*. Verily the smell that comes from the mouth of one who is fasting is more pleasing to Allāh (ﷻ) than the scent of musk." (Muslim)

So the smart Muslim takes care to make the most of this blessed month. He fills its days with fasting, prayer, reading Qur'ān, charity and other good works, and fills its nights with prayers, *tahajjud* and *du'ā's*:

"Whoever spends the night in prayer during Ramaḍān out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to strive to do more good deeds during this month than at other times, and especially during the last ten days of it. 'Ā'ishah said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to strive during Ramaḍān, and especially the last ten days of it, more than he used to at other times." (Muslim)

'Ā'ishah also said:

"When the last ten days of Ramaḍān began, the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) would stay up for the whole night, wake his family up, strive extra hard, and abstain from marital relations." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered Muslims to seek *laylat al-qadr* and encouraged them to spend this night in prayer:

"Seek *laylat al-qadr* during the last ten days of Ramaḍān." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

"Seek *laylat al-qadr* in the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramaḍān." (Bukhārī)

"Whoever spends the night of *laylat al-qadr* in prayer and worship out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

So this blessed month is a time that is purely for worship. The serious-minded Muslim has no time to spend on chatting and idle pursuits throughout the night. He should not be among those who while away the night until dawn approaches, whereupon they have something to eat and fall into a deep sleep, and even miss the *fajr* prayer!

The Muslim who truly understands his religion does not stay up late after he comes home from praying *tarāwīh*, because he knows that in a few short hours' time, he will have to get up again to pray *qiyām al-layl* and eat *saḥūr* (pre-dawn meal) before he goes out to the mosque to pray *fajr*.

The Prophet (ﷺ) commanded Muslims to eat *saḥūr*, because there is much goodness in it. He said:

"Eat *saḥūr*, for in *saḥūr* there is blessing." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

This is because getting up for *saḥūr* reminds one to pray *qiyām al-layl*, and motivates one to go out to the mosque to pray *fajr* in congregation, in addition to the fact that it helps people to fast and that it is the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) that he also taught to his *Ṣaḥābah*. Zayd ibn Thābit (رضي الله عنه) said:

"We ate *saḥūr* with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), then we got up to pray." Someone asked, "How much time was there between the two?" He said, "Fifty *Āyāt* (i.e., the time it would take to recite fifty *Āyāt*)." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The devout Muslim does not neglect *nāfil* fasts at times other than Ramaḍān, such as the day of 'Arafāh, and the ninth and tenth days of Muḥarram. Fasting on these days is among the good deeds which can wipe out one's sins, as the Prophet (ﷺ) explained. Abū Qutādah (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about fasting on the day of 'Arafāh, and he said: 'It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year and the current year.'" (Muslim)

Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) fasted on the day of 'Ashūrā' (the tenth day of Muḥarram) and commanded others to fast on this day too." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Abū Qutādah (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked about fasting on the day of 'Ashūrā' and he said: 'It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year.'" (Muslim)

Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'If I am still alive next year, I will fast on the ninth day (of Muḥarram).'" (Muslim)

Fasting for six days of Shawwāl (the Islāmic month immediately following Ramaḍān) is similarly encouraged, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever fasted Ramaḍān then followed it with six days of Shawwāl, it will be as if he fasted for a lifetime." (Muslim)

It is also recommended to fast for three days of each month, concerning which Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) said:

"My dearest friend [i.e., the Prophet (ﷺ)] advised me to do three things: to fast for three days of each month, to pray two rak'ahs of ḍuḥā prayer, and never to sleep until I pray witr." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Abūl-Dardā' (ﷺ) said:

"My beloved friend (ﷺ) advised me to do three things that I will never give up as long as I live: to fast three days of each month, to pray *ḍuḥā,* and not to sleep until I have prayed *witr*." (Muslim)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (ﷺ) said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: 'Fasting for three days each month is like fasting for an entire lifetime.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Some reports describe these days as being the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the month, which are called *al-ayyām al-bīḍ* (the white days); other reports state that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to fast on three unspecified days of each month.

Mu'ādhah al-'Adawiyyah (ﷺ) said:

"I asked 'Ā'ishah, 'Did the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) used to fast three days in each month?' She said, 'Yes.' I asked her, 'In which part of the month did he used to fast?' She said, 'He did not mind in which part of the month he would fast.'" (Muslim)

The conscientious Muslim intends to go on Ḥajj to the House of Allāh (ﷻ) when he is able to do so. Before he sets out on his journey to the Holy Places, he studies the rules of Ḥajj in great detail, examining all its major and minor aspects, so that when he performs the rites of Ḥajj, his Ḥajj will be complete and correct. He fully understands the wisdom behind this great religious duty and feels his soul filled with the faith and joy of Islām. After completing Ḥajj successfully, he will return to his family and his country as free of sin as the day he was born, and filled with the awareness of the greatness of this religion that has gathered the nations of the earth around the House of Allāh (ﷻ) in a great international conference the like of which the world witnesses at no other time, where despite the differences in skin colour, nationality and language, the pilgrims are united in their response to the call of Allāh (ﷻ) and in their glorification and worship of Him, the One Almighty God.

## He is a true slave of Allāh (ﷻ)

The Muslim firmly believes that his sole purpose in life is to worship his *Rabb*:

﴾I have only created jinns and men, that they may worship Me.﴿ (Qur'ān 51:56)

Worshipping Allāh (ﷻ) may be accomplished through every deed of man that is aimed at building a civilization establishing the authority of Allāh (ﷻ) on earth and living according to His commandments. The awareness that he is a slave of Allāh (ﷻ) is deeply rooted in the heart of the Muslim, and is the starting-point for all his deeds, through which he seeks to earn the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ). So every deed a Muslim does may be as much an act of worship as the rituals of his religion, so long as his intention is to do these deeds for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ).

The most important act of worship that Muslims can perform is to strive to establish the rule of Allāh (ﷻ) on earth, and to follow the way of life that He has prescribed, so that Islām will govern the life of the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

The sincere Muslim will feel that his worship is lacking if he does not strive to achieve the purpose for which Allāh (ﷻ) created *jinn* and men, namely promoting the supremacy of the authority of Allāh (ﷻ) on earth, which is the only way in which mankind can truly worship Allāh (ﷻ):

﴾I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me.﴿ (Qur'ān 51:56)

This is the only way in which the true meaning of "*la ilāha illā Allāh, Muhammad rasūl-Allāh*" may be implemented in this life.

With this clear understanding of the reality of worship in Islām, the Muslim cannot but be a man with a mission in this life, a mission aimed at establishing the rule of Allāh (ﷻ) alone, in all aspects of life. His Islām cannot be complete unless he shoulders the responsibility for fulfilling this mission and devotes concerted, sincere efforts to that end. It is this mission that gives the Muslim a true sense of belonging to Islām, and that is the only thing that will make him join the ranks of the believing, striving Muslims and give meaning to his life, as befits his role as a *khalīfah* on this earth, one whom Allāh (ﷻ) has preferred over most of His creation:

﴾We have honoured the sons of Ādam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation . . . ﴿ (Qur'ān 17:70)

No wonder that the sincere Muslim joyfully embraces this mission and eagerly devotes all his resources — his time, his energy and his wealth — to fulfilling it. It is the distinguishing characteristic of his life, for it entitles him to draw closer to Allāh (ﷻ). Without it, his life has no meaning, and there is no guarantee of earning the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ) except by devoting ongoing efforts to accomplishing this mission. Striving to establish the rule of Allāh (ﷻ) on earth is the greatest form of worship that the Muslim can undertake, for it brings him closer to Allāh (ﷻ) and affords him the means of earning His pleasure. So the Muslim continually strives to make this goal a reality. He gives allegiance to no other cause, carries no banner except that of Islām, and adheres only to the principles of this religion.

## He often reads Qur'ān

In order to reach such a high level, the Muslim must always place himself in the shade of the Glorious Qur'ān, rejoicing in its refreshing guidance and allowing it to point him in the direction of righteousness.

He reads Qur'ān often with an attitude of humility and seeking to understand its meaning. He sets aside regular times for reading, which he never misses: these are times which he devotes solely to reading the words of his *Rabb*. He lets the true meaning of the Qur'ān flow through his soul, cleansing and purifying it, and increasing his wisdom, faith and sense of security:

﴾...For, without doubt, in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find satisfaction.﴿ (Qur'ān 13:28)

The Muslim remembers the beautiful image of the one who reads Qur'ān as portrayed so vividly and eloquently by the Prophet (ﷺ), so that he fills his days and nights with recitation of the Holy Book and rejoices in its blessed meanings. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The likeness of the believer who reads the Qur'ān is like a citron, whose smell is pleasant and whose taste is pleasant; the likeness of a believer who does not read the Qur'ān is like a date, which has no smell, but its taste is sweet; the likeness of the hypocrite who reads the Qur'ān is like a fragrant flower which has a pleasant scent but its taste is bitter; and the likeness of the hypocrite who does not read the Qur'ān is like a colocynth (bitter-apple), which has no smell and its taste is bitter." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Read the Qur'ān, for it will come forward on the Day of Resurrection to intercede for its readers." (Muslim)

And he (ﷺ) said:

"One who reads the Qur'ān fluently is with the honourable pious scribes[1], and one who reads the Qur'ān and struggles to read it even though it is difficult for him, will receive a double reward." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Can any Muslim then ignore the Qur'ān and fail to read it and reflect upon its meanings?

In conclusion, therefore, the true Muslim's responsibility towards his *Rabb* is to have deep, sincere faith, to do constant good work, and continually to seek His pleasure, to be a true servant to Him, and to fulfil the purpose of his existence as Allāh (ﷻ) has defined it:

﴾I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me.﴿ Qur'ān 51:56)

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[1] i.e., the angels who record the deeds of man. The meaning is that one who is well-versed in Qur'ān will enjoy such a high status in the Hereafter that he will be in the exalted company of these pious scribes. [Translator]

# Chapter: Two

## *The Muslim and His Own Self*

### Introduction

Islām wants the Muslim to stand out among people, readily distinguished by his appearance, dress, decent behaviour and good deeds, so that he will be a good example and worthy of the great message that he brings to people.

According to a ḥadīth narrated by the great *Ṣaḥābī* Ibn al- Ḥanzaliyyah, the Prophet (ﷺ) told his Companions, when they were travelling to meet some brothers in faith:

"You are going to visit your brothers, so repair your saddles and make sure that you are dressed well, so that you will stand out among people like an adornment, for Allāh (ﷻ) does not love ugliness."[1]

The Prophet (ﷺ) considered an unkempt and careless appearance, and scruffy clothes and furnishings, to be forms of ugliness, which is hated and forbidden by Islām.

The true Muslim does not neglect himself, no matter how busy he is with his Islāmic responsibilities, because the outward appearance of a man cannot be separated from his inner nature. A refined and pleasant appearance befits a noble and decent essence: this is how the Muslim who is to call others to Allāh (ﷻ) should be.

The smart Muslim is one who strikes a balance between the needs of his body, mind and soul. He gives each the attention it deserves, and does not exaggerate in one aspect to the detriment of the others. In seeking to strike the right balance, he is following the wise guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ).

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) knew about his exaggeration in worship, because he told him ('Abdullah):

"Have I not heard that you fast all day and stay up all night in prayer?" He said, "That is true, O Messenger of Allāh." The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, sleep and get up. For your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

How can the Muslim achieve this balance between his body, mind and soul?

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

# 1-His Body

## Moderation in food and drink

The Muslim takes good care of his body, actively promoting its good health and strength. So he is moderate in his intake of food and drink, avoiding greed and consuming only what he needs to maintain his well-being and energy. This is in accordance with the guidance of Allāh (ﷻ) in the Qur'ān:

﴾. . . Eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allāh loves not the wasters.﴿ (Qur'ān 7:31)

Similarly, the Prophet (ﷺ) also advised moderation in food and drink:

"There is no worse vessel for the son of Ādam to fill than his own stomach, but if he must fill it, then let him allow one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for air."[1]

'Umar (ﷺ) said:

"Beware of filling your stomachs with food and drink, for it is harmful to the body and causes sickness and laziness in performing prayers. Be moderate in both food and drink, for that is healthier for your bodies and furthest removed from extravagance. Allāh (ﷻ) will hate the fat man (one who revels in a life of luxury), and a man will not be condemned until he favours his desires over his religion."[2]

The Muslim avoids drugs and stimulants, especially those which are clearly known to be *ḥarām*. He sleeps early and wakes early, and does not take medicine except for illness. Besides this, everything in his way of life is aimed at promoting his natural health and energy.

The smart Muslim knows that a strong believer is more loved by Allāh (ﷻ) than a weak one, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said, so he tries to strengthen his body through a healthy lifestyle.

## He exercises regularly

Although the Muslim usually enjoys good physical health, because of his abstention from *ḥarām* or harmful food and drink, and his avoidance of bad habits such as staying up late or indulging in activities that may be detrimental to his well-being, he must still make a concerted effort to improve his bodily strength.

The healthy eating habits that he practices are supplemented by an organized exercise program, appropriate to his physical condition, age and social status. This gives strength, energy and vitality to his body, and provides immunity to illness.

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[1] A *ḥasan* ḥadīth, narrated by Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, et al., and authenticated as *ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Ḥākim.

[2] *al-Kanz*, 8/47.

If he is to reap the benefits of exercise, he plans to exercise regularly and does not give up. All of this is done in an organized and systematic fashion, but in moderation, as this is the hallmark of the true Muslim in every place and age.

## His body and clothes are clean

The Muslim whom Islām wants to stand out among people is very clean. He has high standards of personal hygiene, bathing frequently in accordance with the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ) who encouraged people to wash themselves completely and wear perfume,[1] especially on Fridays:

"Have a bath on Fridays and wash your heads, even if you are not in a state of *janābah* (impurity, e.g. following sexual relations), and wear perfume." (Bukhārī).

The Prophet (ﷺ) placed such a great emphasis on cleanliness and bathing that some of the four Imāms considered performing *ghusl* before Friday prayer to be obligatory (*wājib*).

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'It is the duty of every Muslim to take a bath (at least) once every seven days, and to wash his head and body.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The true Muslim keeps his clothes and socks clean, checking them from time to time, to be sure that they have no unpleasant smell. He also wears perfume to help keep himself clean. It is reported that 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) used to say: "Whoever spends a third of his wealth on perfume is not being extravagant."

The smart Muslim takes care of his mouth, for no one should ever have to smell an unpleasant odour coming from it. He does this by cleaning his teeth every day with a *siwāk*, toothbrush, toothpaste and mouthwashes. He also visits the dentist regularly, to check his mouth, at least once a year, and visits other specialists (such as otolaryngologists or "ear, nose and throat" doctors) as necessary, so that his mouth will stay clean and his breath fresh.

'Ā'ishah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) "never woke from sleeping at any time of day or night without cleaning his teeth with a *siwāk* before performing *wuḍū'*."[2]

The Prophet's concern for oral hygiene was so great that he said:

"If it were not for the fact that I did not want to overburden my Ummah, I would have ordered them to use the *siwāk* before every prayer." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

'Ā'ishah was asked what the Prophet (ﷺ) used to do first when he came home. She said: "Use *siwāk*." (Muslim)

Regrettably, some Muslims neglect these teachings that are at the heart of Islām, and do not pay heed to the cleanliness of their mouths, bodies and clothes. So you may see them going to the mosque or to other religious meetings and study circles, annoying their brothers with their unpleasant smell and

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[1] Wearing perfume in public is for men only; women are not permitted to do so. [Translator]

[2] A *ḥasan* ḥadīth narrated by Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd.

offending the angels who surround these blessed gatherings. What is really strange is the fact that they themselves listen to and repeat the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ) that whoever eats onions, garlic or leeks should not go to the mosque because his breath may disturb the angels and the people:

"Whoever eats onions, garlic or leeks should not approach our mosque, because whatever offends the sons of Ādam may offend the angels." (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) banned those who had eaten these pungent vegetables from coming anywhere near the mosque, lest the people and the angels be offended by their bad breath, but these smells pale into insignificance beside the stench of dirty clothes, filthy socks, unwashed bodies and unclean mouths that emanate from some careless and unkempt individuals who offend others in any gathering.

Imām Aḥmad and Imām al-Nisā'ī narrate that Jābir (ؓ) said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) came to visit us, and saw a man who was wearing dirty clothes. He said, 'Could this person not find anything with which to wash his clothes?'"

The Prophet (ﷺ) did not like a Muslim to appear before people wearing dirty clothes, if he had the means to clean them. He encouraged Muslims always to dress in clean clothes and to present a neat and attractive appearance. He used to say:

"There is nothing wrong with keeping two garments for Friday, apart from one's work clothes." [1]

Islām frequently encourages its followers to be clean always, to perfume their clothes and to ensure that their bodies always smell fresh and clean. This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) used to do, according to the report that Imām Muslim quotes from Anas ibn Mālik, who said: "I have never smelt any ambergris or musk that had a better scent than the scent of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ)."

Many reports describe the cleanliness of the Prophet's clothes and body, and describe the sweet smell of his sweat. For example, if he shook hands with a man, his beautiful scent would remain on that man's hand for the rest of the day, and if he laid his hand on the head of a child, that child would stand out from others by virtue of his sweet smell.

Imām Bukhārī mentions, in *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, reporting from Jābir, that the Prophet (ﷺ) never passed through a place but a person who followed him would know that he had been there, from his lingering scent.

Once, the Prophet (ﷺ) slept in the house of Anas. He sweated, and Umm Anas came to collect the sweat in a bottle. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked her about what she was doing, and she told him: "This is your sweat; we add it to our perfume and it is the best of perfumes." (Muslim)

How urgent is the Muslims' need to follow the guidance of this great Messenger in his command to take care of one's hair and keep it neat in accordance with the teachings of Islām. This is reported in the ḥadīth that Abū Dāwūd quotes from Abū Hurayrah (ؓ), who said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Whoever has hair, let him look after it properly.'"

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah. Its *isnād* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

Looking after one's hair, according to Islāmic teaching, involves keeping it clean, combing it, perfuming it and styling it nicely.

The Prophet (ﷺ) did not like people to leave their hair uncombed and unkempt, so that they looked like wild monsters. He described such an ugly appearance as being like the *Shayṭān*. In *al-Muwaṭṭā*, Imām Mālik reports a ḥadīth with a *mursal isnād* from 'Aṭā' ibn Yassār, who said:

"The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was in the mosque, when a man with unkempt hair and an untidy beard came in. The Prophet (ﷺ) pointed to him, as if indicating that to him that he should tidy up his hair and beard. The man went and did so, then returned. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Is this not better than that any one of you should come with unkempt hair, looking like the *Shayṭān*?"

The Prophet's likening a man with untidy hair to the *Shayṭān* clearly shows how concerned Islām is with a neat and pleasant appearance, and how opposed it is to scruffiness and ugliness.

The Prophet (ﷺ) always took note of people's appearance, and he never saw a scruffily-dressed man with untidy hair but he criticized him for his self-neglect. Imām Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī report that Jābir (رضي الله عنه) said: "The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) came to visit us, and he saw an unkempt man whose hair was going in all directions, so he said, 'Could he not find anything with which to calm his head?'"

## Good appearance

The true Muslim takes good care of his clothes, so you will see him presenting a pleasant appearance, without being extravagant. He is pleasant to look at and to meet, and does not annoy people with his careless, dishevelled appearance. He always checks himself before he goes out to meet people, and he makes himself look good, in moderation, for the Prophet (ﷺ) used to make himself look good in front of his Companions, as well as in front of his family.

In his commentary on the *Āyah*:

﴾Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful [gifts] of Allāh, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, [which He has provided] for sustenance? . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 7:32)

Al-Qurṭubī said: "Makḥūl reported from 'Ā'ishah: 'A group of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) was waiting at the door for him, so he prepared to go out to meet them. There was a vessel of water in the house, and he peered into it, smoothing his beard and his hair. ('Ā'ishah said:) I asked him, "O Messenger of Allāh, even you do this?" He said: "Yes, when a man goes out to meet his brothers, let him prepare himself properly, for Allāh (ﷻ) is beautiful and loves beauty."'"

The Muslim does all of this in accordance with the Islāmic ideal of moderation, avoiding the extremes of either exaggeration or negligence:

﴾Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just [balance] between those [extremes].﴿ (Qur'ān 25:67)

Islām wants its followers, and especially its advocates (*dā'īs*) to stand out in gatherings in an attractive fashion, not to appear unsightly or unbearable. Neglecting one's appearance to the extent of being offensive to one's companions in the name of asceticism and humility is not part of Islām. The Prophet (ﷺ), who was the epitome of asceticism and humility, used to dress in decent clothes and present a pleasant appearance to his family and his companions. He regarded dressing well and looking good as a demonstration of the blessings of Allāh (ﷻ):

"Allāh (ﷻ) loves to see the signs of His gifts on His slave." [1]

Ibn Sa'd reports in *al-Ṭabaqāt* that Jundab ibn Makīth (ﷺ) said:

"Whenever a delegation came to meet the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), he would wear his best clothes and order his leading Companions to do likewise. I saw the Prophet (ﷺ) on the day that the delegation of Kindah came to meet him; he was wearing a Yemeni garment, and Abū Bakr and 'Umar were dressed similarly."

Ibn al-Mubārak, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim, al-Bayhaqī and others report that 'Umar (ﷺ) said:

"I saw the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) ask for a new garment. He put it on, and when it reached his knees he said, 'Praise be to Allāh, Who has given me clothes with which to cover myself and make myself look beautiful in this life.'"

'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf (ﷺ) used to dress in a cloak or garment that was worth four or five hundred *dirhams* (*Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/131), and Ibn 'Abbās bought a garment worth one thousand *dirhams* and wore it (*Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/131).

So long as this taking care of one's outward appearance does not go to extremes, then it is part of the beauty that Allāh (ﷻ) has allowed for His slaves and encouraged them to adopt:

﴿O children of Ādam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allāh loves not the wasters. Say, who has forbidden the beautiful [gifts] of Allāh, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, [which He has provided] for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, [and] purely for them on the Day of Judgement. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who understand.﴾ (Qur'ān 7:31-32)

Muslim reports from Ibn Mas'ūd (ﷺ) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"No one who has even an atom's-weight of pride in his heart will enter Paradise." A man asked him, "What if he likes his clothes and shoes to look good?" (Meaning, is this counted as pride?) The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Allāh (ﷻ) is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride means denying the truth and looking down on other people."

This is the understanding adopted by the *Ṣaḥābah* and those who followed them sincerely. Therefore Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (ﷺ) always took care to dress well and to ensure that he smelled clean and fresh, and

[1] A *Ḥasan* ḥadīth narrated by al-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥakīm.

urged others to do likewise. One day he met a man who used to attend his circle, who was dressed in scruffy clothes. He took him to one side and offered him one thousand *dirhams* with which to smarten himself up. The man told him, "I have money, I do not need this." Abū Ḥanīfah admonished him: "Have you not heard the ḥadīth, 'Allāh (ﷻ) loves to see the signs of His gifts on His servant'? So you have to change yourself, and not appear offensive to your friend."

Naturally, those who call people to Allāh (ﷻ) should be better and smarter in appearance than others, so that they will be better able to attract people and make their message reach their hearts. Indeed they, unlike others, are required to be like this even if they do not go out and meet people, because those who proclaim the word of Allāh (ﷻ) should take care of their appearance and pay attention to the cleanliness of their bodies, clothes, nails and hair. They should do this even if they are in a state of isolation or retreat, in response to the call of the natural unaffected inclination of man (*fiṭrah*) which the Prophet (ﷺ) told us about and outlined its requirements:

"Five things are part of the *fiṭrah*: circumcision, removing the pubic hair, plucking hair from the armpits, cutting the nails, and trimming the moustache." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Taking care of oneself in accordance with this *fiṭrah* is something encouraged by Islām and supported by every person of common sense and good taste.

Nevertheless, paying attention to one's appearance should not make a Muslim fall into the trap of over-exaggerating his grooming to the extent that he loses sight of the sense of balance prescribed by Islāmic teaching. The Muslim always aims at moderation in all things, and is on the alert to prevent any one aspect of his life from taking over at the expense of another.

The Muslim never forgets that Islām, which encourages him to take care of his appearance and to wear his beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer, is also the religion that warns him against going to extremes in that, and tells him to avoid becoming enslaved by his appearance, as the ḥadīth says:

"Wretched is the slave of the *dīnār*, *dirham*, and fancy clothes of velvet and silk! If he is given, he is pleased, and if he is not given, he is displeased." (Bukhārī)

No doubt those who call people to Allāh (ﷻ) are saved from this error, because they surround themselves with the protection of Islām and adopt the principles of moderation that it has brought.

# 2- His Mind

## Knowledge is an obligation and an honour for the Muslim

The Muslim believes that exercising his mind and seeking knowledge and discovering the signs of Allāh (ﷻ) in the universe is an obligation, because of the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim." (Bukhārī)

Therefore the Muslim must continue to pursue knowledge, as long as the breath of life remains in his body. The fact that Allāh (ﷻ) has raised the status of those who have knowledge, and described them alone as truly fearing Him, should be enough to encourage the Muslim to apply himself to seeking knowledge. For He said:

﴾. . . Those truly fear Allāh, among His Slaves, who have knowledge . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 35:28)

No one truly fears Allāh (ﷻ) except those whose minds are enlightened enough to see the greatness and power of Allāh (ﷻ) manifested in the creation of the universe and all living things, and these are the people of knowledge. So He has preferred them over those who have no knowledge:

﴾. . . Say: 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.'﴿ (Qur'ān 39:9)

Ṣafwān ibn 'Assāl al-Murādī came to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the mosque and said, "O Messenger of Allāh, I have come seeking knowledge." The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "Welcome, O seeker of knowledge! Truly the angels surround the seeker of knowledge with their wings, gathering around him in ranks one above the other, until they reach the first heaven, out of love for that which he seeks."[1]

The texts that extol the virtue of knowledge and exhort its pursuit are many, therefore the true Muslim is either a scholar or a seeker of knowledge, and cannot be anything else.

## Continuously seeking knowledge until death

True knowledge does not mean obtaining a degree or diploma that will let one earn an income and guarantee a good standard of living, after which one turns away from learning and does not explore the treasure of knowledge any further; true learning means that one continues to read and study, increasing one's learning day by day, in accordance with the words of the Qur'ān:

﴾. . . But say, 'O my *Rabb!* Advance me in knowledge.'﴿ (Qur'ān 20:114)

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Ḥākim with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

Our righteous predecessors never stopped seeking to increase their knowledge, no matter how high a level of learning they had achieved, and they would continue their pursuit until the end of their lives. They believed that knowledge was a living thing that would thrive if it were actively pursued, but would wither and perish if it were ignored and abandoned. Many sayings are attributed to them that eloquently express their respect for learning and their keenness to acquire knowledge. Examples of their sayings are given below.

Imām Ibn ʻAbd al-Barr reported that Ibn Abī Ghassān said: "So long as you are seeking knowledge you are knowledgeable, but as soon as you abandon this pursuit you become ignorant."

Imām Mālik (ﷺ) said: "No one who has knowledge should stop seeking knowledge."

Imām ʻAbdullah ibn al-Mubārak was asked: "How long will you seek knowledge?" He said, "Until I die, for probably I have not yet learnt the things that will benefit me most."

Imām Abū ʻAmr ibn al-ʻAlā' was asked: "For how long does it befit a man to seek knowledge?" He said, "For as long as he has life in him."

Imām Sufyān ibn ʻUyaynah gave an excellent answer when he was asked "Who is most in need of seeking knowledge?" He said: "Those who have the most knowledge." He was asked, "Why?" and he replied, "Because if they make a mistake, it is worse."

Such was Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH), the great *mufassir* (Qur'ānic exegete) and prominent scholar in philosophy (*ʻilm al-kalām*) and other disciplines, who authored many works. Allāh (ﷻ) gave him such fame in knowledge that people would come from all over to see him whenever he visited a city. When he came to the city of Merv (in Turkmenistan), flocks of scholars and students came to have the privilege of listening to and learning from him. Among the seekers of knowledge who attended his circle was a young man, less than twenty years old, who was very well versed in literature and genealogy. When Imām Fakhr al-Dīn realized that this student was an expert in genealogy, a field in which he knew very little, he asked his student to teach him. He did not find it unacceptable to become the student of his student, and he even made him sit in the teacher's place while he himself sat at his feet. Such an act was characteristic of Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and it did not detract from his high status, as he was the Imām of his age.

This remarkable story was told by the literary historian Yāqūt al-Hamwī in his book *Muʻjam al-udabā'* (Dictionary of literary authors), where he gives a biography of ʻAzīz al-Dīn Ismāʻīl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Marwazī al-Nassābah al-Ḥusayni, whom Yāqūt met and spent much time with, so was able to write a comprehensive biography of him. In this biography he says:

"ʻAzīz al-Dīn told me: ʻImām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī went to Merv. He had such a great reputation and was held in such awe that nobody dared to argue with him; they would barely breathe in his presence. I went to meet him, and I often went to study with him. One day he said to me: "I would like you to write me a book giving the genealogy of *al-Ṭālibiyyīn* (the descendants of Abū Ṭālib) so that I may study it, for I do not want to remain ignorant of it." I asked him: "Do you want it presented as a family tree, or written down as a narrative?" He said, "A family tree cannot be learnt by heart. I want something that I can memorize." So I went away and wrote the book, which I called *al-Fakhrī.* When I brought it to him, he took it, then got up from his mattress, sat on the mat, and told me to sit in the place he had just vacated. I thought this was too much, and told him: "I am your servant." I reprimanded me severely, saying, "Sit

where I tell you!" Allāh (ﷻ) knows, I felt that I had no choice but to sit where he told me. Then he began to read the book to me, while he was sitting at my feet, asking me about anything he did not understand, until he finished the book. When he had finished, he said, "Now sit wherever you wish, for in this field of knowledge you are my teacher and I am your student, and it is not right for the student to sit anywhere but at the feet of his teacher. So I got up, and he sat in his rightful place, and I began to read to him, sitting where he had sat previously.'"

After quoting this incident, Yāqūt said, "Indeed this is good manners, especially for a man who enjoys such a high status."

How great was the love and respect these scholars gave to knowledge! How highly they regarded it, and how great is the need for the later generation to learn from the attitude of their forebears!

## What Muslim needs to know

The first thing that the Muslim needs to know is how to read the Qur'ān properly (with *tajwīd*) and to understand its meaning. Then he should learn something of the sciences of ḥadīth, the sīrah of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the history of the *Ṣaḥabah* and *Tābi'īn*, who are prominent figures in Islām. He should acquire as much knowledge of *fiqh* as he needs to ensure that his worship and daily dealings are correct, and he should ensure that he has a sound grasp of the basic principles of his religion. This is the duty of the Muslim who is not a specialist in the sciences of Sharī'ah. If he is a specialist in a branch of Sharī'ah, then he does what every true Muslim should do, which is to do his best to learn his speciality thoroughly and be successful in it. It goes without saying that every Muslim also needs to learn Arabic properly.

## The Muslim should be proficient in his speciality

Besides this, the Muslim turns to his own speciality and gives it all of his energy and pays a great deal of attention to it. He approaches it like a Muslim who believes that it is a religious obligation to work in his field of specialization, whether it is in Sharī'ah or in another area of religious knowledge, or in another field such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, astronomy, medicine, industry, commerce, etc. Therefore he should become proficient in whatever field he has specialized in, and should spare no effort to read whatever has been written about it, both in his own language and in others if he is able to. He should keep abreast of developments in his field through continual reading and study of all its aspects. This is because, in these times, the smart Muslim is the one who achieves great academic success, which will raise his status in the eyes of other people. This in turn will enhance his *da'wah*, so long as he presents it sincerely and earnestly, and in accordance with the spirit of Islām and its teachings about knowledge.

Islām has made knowledge a duty, whereby the one who seeks it draws closer to Allāh (ﷻ) and adopts it as a means of earning His pleasure. So we see that the scholars of the early generation used to emphasize these sublime principles in their introductions to their books, because through the knowledge that they spent their lives spreading, they were seeking to earn the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ), and they

presented the results of their study purely for His sake.

## The Muslim exposes himself to information about other fields

The smart Muslim does not restrict himself to his own field, but is open to learning about other areas too. So he reads books and academic, literary and cultural journals about various useful branches of knowledge, especially those that are related to his own field. In this way, he gains a little knowledge about many things, which enriches his mind and broadens his horizons.

## The Muslim is proficient in a foreign language

He does not forget to pay attention to foreign languages, because these days, learning a foreign language is one of the most important tasks required of the active Muslim who understands the demands of contemporary Islāmic life.

His religion gives the attentive Muslim a great incentive to learn foreign languages. Fifteen centuries ago, the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged the study of foreign languages so that the Muslims would always be able to communicate with various nations and races, and convey to them the message of truth that Allāh (ﷻ) has entrusted to them to proclaim throughout the world. We see evidence of this in the ḥadīth narrated by Zayd ibn Thābit (رضي الله عنه), in which he says that the Prophet (ﷺ) told him:

"'O Zayd, learn the writing of the Jews, for by Allāh (ﷻ) I do not trust the Jews to write anything down for me.' (Zayd) said: So I learnt it, and it only took me a month to become proficient in it. Then I used to take down whatever letters the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to send to them, and I would read for him the letters that they sent him."

In another report he said: "The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) asked me, 'Do you know Syriac? I have received a letter in this language.' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Then learn it.' So I learnt it." [1]

Similarly, Ibn al-Zubayr (رضي الله عنه) was proficient in a number of languages, but learning them did not distract him from his religion or preparing for the Hereafter. He had a hundred (male) slaves, each of whom spoke a different language, and he used to speak to each slave in his own language. If you were to see this man when he was dealing with worldly affairs, you would think that he was a man who did not give a second's thought to the Hereafter, and if you saw him dealing with religious matters, you would think that he was a man who did not give a second's thought to this world.[2]

Nowadays, more than ever before, the Muslim needs to be proficient in foreign languages so that he may know what is going on around him, both positive and negative, and so that he may understand what has been written about his Ummah and its heritage in languages other than his own, and thus be able to defend his Ummah from evil and speak up for its well-being.

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

[2] Reported by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak* 3/549, and Ibn Na'īm in *al-Ḥilyah*, 1/334.

## 3 The Muslim's Soul

While he is taking care of his physical and mental needs, the true Muslim does not forget that he is not comprised only of a body and mind, but he also has a passionate, yearning soul whose higher longings motivate him to lift himself up by devoting himself to worship, seeking the blessings of Allāh (ﷻ) and fearing His punishment.

## The Muslim polishes his soul through worship

The Muslim is obliged to take care of his soul, so he starts to polish it and refine it through constant worship and awareness of Allāh (ﷻ), night and day. He is alert to the devious tricks and deceptive whispers of the *Shayṭān* and if, in some moment of human weakness, evil thoughts come to him from that source, he remembers Allāh (ﷻ) and finds his way back to the Straight Path:

﴿Those who fear Allāh, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allāh to remembrance, when lo! They see aright.﴾ (Qur'ān 7:201)

Therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to tell his Companions: "Renew your faith." He was asked, "O Messenger of Allāh, how do we renew our faith?" He said, "By frequently repeating *lā ilāha illā -Allāh*."[1]

The Muslim seeks to strengthen his soul through various kinds of worship which he performs out of obedience to and fear of Allāh (ﷻ), such as reading Qur'ān carefully and with understanding, and remembering Allāh (ﷻ) with humility, and praying correctly and with presence of mind, and other kinds of worship and spiritual exercises, training himself to adhere to different acts of worship until they become second nature and he cannot do without them. Thus he develops and enhances his feelings until, in most cases, he becomes alert and aware, conscious that Allāh (ﷻ) is watching him in public and in private, so that he never mistreats the people he deals with and never deviates from the true path.

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad with a *jayyid isnād*.

## He keeps company with righteous people and joins religious gatherings

The Muslim seeks to attain this high status by keeping company with righteous people who will teach one another, and him, about Truth (*ḥaqq*) and patience and constancy (*sabr*), and by frequently attending religious gatherings where Allāh's name is mentioned often, where there is discussion of the greatness of Islāmic teaching regarding the *tarbiyah* (education, development) of the individual, the family and the community and where those present ponder the might of Allāh (ﷻ), the Subduer, the Omnipotent, from which nothing in heaven or earth can detract, and meditate on the wonder of His creation of the universe and of man. In such gatherings, souls are purified, hearts are cleansed, and a person's whole being is filled with faith.

So 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah (ﷺ), whenever he met one of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), used to say, "Come, let us believe in our *Rabb* for a while." When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard about it, he said, "May Allāh have mercy on Ibn Rawāḥah, for he loves the gatherings that the angels feel proud to attend."[1]

The rightly-guided *khalīfah* 'Umar al-Fārūq (ﷺ) used to make the effort to take a regular break from his many duties and the burden of his position as ruler. He would take the hand of one or two men and say, "Come on, let us go and increase our faith," then they would remember Allāh (ﷻ).[2]

Even 'Umar (ﷺ), who was so righteous and performed so many acts of worship, felt the need to purify his soul from time to time. He would remove himself for a while from the cares and worries of life, to refresh his soul and cleanse his heart. Likewise, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (ﷺ) would often say to his companions, when they were walking, "Let us sit down and believe for a while."[3]

The Muslim is responsible for strengthening his soul and purifying his heart. He must always push himself to attain a higher level, and guard against slipping down:

﴾By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right — truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!﴿ (Qur'ān 91: 7-10)

So the Muslim is required to choose his friends carefully and to join only those gatherings that will increase his faith, *taqwā* and insight. He should avoid the bad company of the devils among mankind, and keep away from gatherings of sin and disobedience which will only corrupt his soul:

﴾And keep your soul content with those who call on their *Rabb* morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.﴿ (Qur'ān 18:28)

## He frequently repeats *du'ā's* and supplications described in ḥadīths

Another way in which the Muslim may strengthen his soul and connect his heart to Allāh (ﷻ) is by repeating the supplications which it is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say on various occasions.

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2] *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/329

[3] *Ibid.*

So there is a *du'ā'* which he would say when he left his house, and others for entering the home, saying farewell to a traveller, welcoming a traveller home, wearing new clothes, lying down in bed, waking up from sleep, etc. There is hardly anything that the Prophet (ﷺ) did that he did not have a *du'ā'* for, through which he asked Allāh (ﷻ) to guide him, protect him from error, to take care of him and to decree good for him, as is explained in the books of *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīths narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ). See, for example, *al-Adhkār* by al-Nawawī and *al-Ma'thūrāt* by Ḥasan al-Bannā'.[1] He used to teach these *du'ā'*s and *adhkār* to his Companions, and encouraged them to repeat them at the appropriate times.

The smart Muslim is keen to learn these *du'ā'*s and *adhkār*, following the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his distinguished Companions, and he keeps repeating them at the appropriate times, as much as he is able. In this way his heart will remain in contact with Allāh (ﷻ), and his soul will be cleansed and purified. Through these spiritual exercises the Prophet (ﷺ) trained the souls of the first generation of the *Ṣaḥābah*, so that they became pure and unsullied. Islām wrought a great miracle in forming a refined, superior generation that was unique in the history of mankind, one which made such wondrous achievements in a few short years.

The true Muslim, today more than ever, needs to train his soul to soar to that high level and to live up to the heavy responsibilities of his *da'wah*.

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[1] English-speaking Muslims who wish to learn *du'ās* may consult *Selected Prayers* by Jamal Badawī, which is based largely on Ḥasan al-Banna's *al-Ma'thūrāt*, and includes transliterations and translations of many *du'ās*. [Translator]

# Chapter 3

## *The Muslim and His Parents*

### Treating them with kindness and respect (*birr*)

One of the main distinguishing characteristics of the true Muslim is his respectful and kind treatment of his parents, because to treat parents with kindness and respect is one of the greatest commandments of Islām, as is clearly confirmed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The Muslim who is truly following this commandment, which is a constant theme in the Book of Allāh (ﷻ) and the Sunnah of His Prophet, must be characterized by his kind and respectful attitude towards his parents.

### He recognizes their status and knows his duties towards them

Islām has raised the status of the parents to a level that is unknown in any other religion, in that it has placed kindness and respect towards them on a level that is just one degree below belief in Allāh (ﷻ) and true worship of Him.

Allāh (ﷻ) revealed many *Āyāt* which reinforce the message that pleasing one's parents comes second only to pleasing Him, and respecting them is counted as a human virtue that is just one step below belief in Him (ﷻ):

﴿worship Allāh, and join not any partners with Him; and do good — to parents . . .﴾ (Qur'ān 4:36)

So the true Muslim is kinder and more respectful towards his parents than any other person in the world.

The Qur'ān paints a vivid picture of the high status of parents, and explains the excellent way in which the Muslim should treat them, if one or both of them should live to old age and reach the stage of senility and incapability, to a degree that was unknown before the light of this religion dawned upon the face of the earth.

﴿Your *Rabb* has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My *Rabb!* Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'﴾ (Qur'ān 17:23-24)

This is a divine commandment to the Muslim, which is presented in the form of an ultimate and inescapable decree: ﴿Your *Rabb* has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents.﴾ These words represent the strong connection between worshipping Allāh (ﷻ) and treating

parents with kindness and respect, thus raising the status of parents to a level that wise men, reformers and philosophers have never managed to ascribe to them.

This *Āyah* does not stop at drawing this vivid picture of respect towards one's parents, but it goes on to mobilize the forces of mercy, compassion and kindness in the hearts of children in a gentle way that is filled with humanity: ﴾Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life.﴿ When they reach the age of senility and infirmity, they are under your care, and you must be careful to avoid uttering any word of complaint or anger towards them: ﴾Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them.﴿ You must take the time to choose the right words to say to them, words that will make them feel loved and wanted: ﴾but address them in terms of honour.﴿ Your attitude towards them should be one of respect, humility and obedience: ﴾And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility.﴿ And pray for them for the unforgettable favours they have done for you, as they took care of you when you were small and weak: ﴾And say: 'My *Rabb!* Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.﴿

The open hearted Muslim finds frequent references in the Qur'ān which increase his respect for his parents and encourage him to treat them kindly:

﴾worship Allāh, and join not any partners with Him; and do good — to parents . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 4:36)

﴾ We have enjoined on man kindness to parents . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 29:8)

﴾And We have enjoined on man [to be good] to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 31:14)

Anyone who looks into the Islāmic sources regarding the kind treatment of parents will also find plenty of ḥadīths that reinforce the message of the *Āyāt* quoted above and reiterate the virtue of kindness and respect towards one's parents, as well as warning against disobedience or mistreatment of them for any reason whatsoever.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (ﷺ) said:

"I asked the Prophet (ﷺ), 'Which deed is most liked by Allāh (ﷻ)?' He said, 'Prayer offered on time.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Kindness and respect towards parents.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Jihād for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ).'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ), who was a great educator, placed kindness and respect towards parents between two of the greatest deeds in Islām: prayer offered on time and jihād for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ). Prayer is the pillar or foundation of the faith, and jihād is the pinnacle of Islām. What a high status the Prophet (ﷺ) has given to parents!

A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) to "make *bay'ah*" and to pledge to undertake hijrah and jihād in the hope of receiving reward from Allāh (ﷻ). The Prophet (ﷺ) did not rush to accept his *bay'ah*, but asked him:

"Are either of your parents alive?" The man said, "Yes, both of them." The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, "And do you wish to receive reward from Allāh (ﷻ)?" The man replied. 'Yes." So the kindhearted and compassionate Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "Go back to your parents and keep them company in the best possible way." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to a report narrated by both Bukhārī and Muslim, a man came and asked the Prophet (ﷺ) for permission to participate in jihād. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He said, "Yes," so the Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "So perform jihād by taking care of them."

In the midst of preparing his army for jihād, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not forget the weakness of parents and their claims on their children, so he gently discouraged this volunteer and reminded him to take care of his parents, despite the fact that at that time he needed all the manpower he could get for the forthcoming jihād. This is because he understood the importance of respect and kind treatment of parents, and knew its position in the overall Islāmic framework that Allāh (ﷻ) has designed for the well-being and happiness of mankind.

When the mother of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ objected to her son's embracing Islām, she told him: "Give up Islām, or else I will go on hunger strike until I die. Then you will feel shame before the Arabs, as they will say, 'He killed his mother.'" Sa'd told her: "You should know that, by Allāh (ﷻ), even if you had a hundred souls, and they left your body one by one, I would never give up Islām." Then Allāh (ﷻ) revealed an *Āyah* which the Prophet (ﷺ) recited to the Muslims, in which Sa'd was rebuked for the harshness of his reply to his mother:

﴾But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice [and consideration] . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 31:15)

The story of the devoted worshipper Jurayj, which was told by the Prophet (ﷺ), is a vivid illustration of the importance of respecting one's parents and being quick to obey them. One day his mother called him whilst he was praying, and he wondered, "My *Rabb*, my mother or my prayer?" He chose to continue his prayer (rather than answer his mother). She called him a second time, but he continued praying and did not answer her. Then she called him a third time, and when he did not respond she prayed to Allāh (ﷻ) not to let him die until he had seen the face of a prostitute.

There was a prostitute in that locality who had committed adultery with a shepherd and had become pregnant. When she realized that she was with child, the shepherd told her: "If you are asked about the father of the baby, say that it is Jurayj, the devoted worshipper." This is what she said, so the people went and destroyed the place where he used to pray. The ruler brought him to the public square, and on the way Jurayj remembered his mother's prayer and smiled. When he was brought forth to be punished, he asked for permission to pray two *rak'ahs*, then he asked for the infant to be brought forth and whispered in his ear, "Who is your father?" The infant said, "My father is so-and-so, the shepherd."[1] The people exclaimed "*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*!" and "*Allāhu akbar*!" They told Jurayj, "We will rebuild your prayer-place with silver and gold!" He said, "No, just rebuild it as it was, with bricks and mortar."

Concerning this story, which is reported by Bukhārī, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "If Jurayj had had sound knowledge, he would have known that answering his mother was more important than continuing his prayer." Hence the *fuqahā'* suggested that if a man is praying a *nāfil* prayer and one of his parents calls him, he is obliged to stop his prayer and answer them.

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[1] This child is one of the three who spoke in the cradle. The other two are 'Īsā ibn Maryam (Jesus the son of Mary) and the child who was with his mother among the people of *al-Ukhdūd* (the ditch). [Author]

## He is kind and respectful towards them even if they are not Muslim

The Prophet (ﷺ) raised his teachings to a new peak when he advised his followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect even if they followed a religion other than Islām. This is clear from the ḥadīth of Asmā’ bint Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (ﷺ), who said: “My mother came to me, and she was a *mushrik* at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). I asked the Prophet (ﷺ): ‘My mother has come to me and needs my help, so should I help her?’ He said, ‘Yes, keep in touch with your mother and help her.’” (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The true Muslim who understands the meaning of this Qur’ānic guidance and the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) cannot but be the best and kindest of all people towards his parents, at all times. This is the practice of the *Ṣaḥābah* and those who followed them sincerely. A man asked Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab (ﷺ): “I understood all of the *Āyah* about kindness and respect towards parents, apart from the phrase ‘but address them in terms of honour.’ How can I address them in terms of honour?” Sa‘īd replied: “It means that you should address them as a servant addresses his master.” Ibn Sīrīn (ﷺ) used to speak to his mother in a soft voice, like that of a sick person, out of respect for her.

## He is extremely reluctant to disobey them

If we turn from the commandments to treat parents with kindness and respect, and look at what Islām says to discourage disobedience towards one’s parents, we find teachings that are aimed at making the disobedient child realize the error of his ways. Disobedience towards one’s parents is likened to *shirk*, just as treating them with kindness and respect is connected to belief in Allāh (ﷻ). Disobedience towards one’s parents is a heinous crime that the true Muslim fears to commit, because it will diminish his reward and is, in fact, viewed as one of the worst sins.

Abū Bakrah Nufay‘ ibn al-Ḥārith said:

“The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) asked us three times, ‘Shall I tell you the greatest sins?’ We said, ‘Yes, O Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).’ He said: ‘Associating partners with Allāh (ﷻ) and disobeying one’s parents.’” (Bukhārī and Muslim)

## His mother comes first, then his father

In order to avoid any imbalance, such as the child treating one parent well at the expense of the other, the Islāmic teachings concerning one’s relationship with one’s parents deal with the mother and the father individually. So, as we have seen, when the man came to give *bay‘ah* and pledge to take part in jihād, the Prophet (ﷺ) asked him, “Are either of your parents alive?” This indicates that the Muslim is obliged to treat both parents equally well. Similarly, Asmā’ was ordered to keep in contact with and help her *mushrik* mother.

A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked him:

"O Messenger of Allāh, who among people is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" He said, "Then your father." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

This ḥadīth confirms that the Prophet (ﷺ) gave precedence to kind treatment of one's mother over kind treatment of one's father, and the *Ṣaḥābah* used to remind the Muslims of this after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Ibn 'Abbās (ﷺ), a great scholar of this Ummah, considered kind treatment of the mother to be the best deed to bring one closer to Allāh (ﷻ). A man came to him and said: "I asked for a woman's hand in marriage, and she refused me; someone else asked for her hand, and she accepted and married him. I felt jealous, and killed her. Will my repentance be accepted?" Ibn 'Abbās asked, "Is your mother still alive?" He said, "No." So he told him: "Repent to Allāh (ﷻ) and do your best to draw close to Him." 'Aṭā' ibn Yassār, who narrated this report from Ibn 'Abbās, said: "I went and asked Ibn 'Abbās, 'Why did you ask him if his mother was still alive?' He said, 'Because I know of no other deed that brings people closer to Allāh (ﷻ) than kind treatment and respect towards one's mother.'"[1]

Imām Bukhārī opens his book *al-Adab al-Mufrad* with a chapter on respect and kindness towards parents (*birr al-wālidayn*), in which he places the section on good treatment of the mother before the section on good treatment of the father, consistent with the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Qur'ān evokes feelings of love and respect in the heart of the child, and encourages him to treat his parents well. It refers to the mother being given precedence because of pregnancy and breastfeeding, and the pains and trials that she suffers during these two stages, in a most gentle and compassionate way. It recognizes her noble sacrifice and great tenderness and care:

﴾And We have enjoined on man [to be good] to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: [hear the command]: 'Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is [your final] Goal.'﴿ (Qur'ān 31:14)

What supreme teaching! What humane, compassionate direction: ﴾Show gratitude to Me and to your parents.﴿ Showing gratitude to parents for what they have done for their child comes second only to showing gratitude to Allāh (ﷻ), and is one of the best righteous deeds. What a high status this religion gives to parents!

Then the child makes his way in the world and becomes rich, and his wife and children distract him from caring for his parents. He forgets how much his father spent on him, so he fails to spend on his father, thus earning the anger of Allāh (ﷻ). But the true Muslim is safe from this, because he is constantly aware of the wise teachings of Islām, and responds to the words of the Prophet (ﷺ): "You and your wealth are for your father."[2]

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2] Reported by Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah with a *ḥasan isnād*. The full text of the ḥadīth is: "A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: 'O Messenger of All āh, I have wealth and children, and my father wants to take all of my wealth.' The Prophet (ﷺ)

The true Muslim is struck by these teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his heart is filled with love, respect and kindness towards his parents. Thus he is protected from falling into the sin of disobedience, and he will truly be as the Prophet of Islām wanted him to be: he and his wealth will be for his father.

## He treats his parents' friends well.

Islām did not stop at teaching its followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect, but it also enjoins them to show respect to those whom their parents love.

Ibn 'Umar (ﷺ) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend." In another report: "One of the best kinds of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with his father's friend even after his father has passed away." (Muslim)

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (ﷺ) met a friend of his father 'Umar (ﷺ), and went out of his way to treat him well and show him respect. Some of those who were with him said, "Is it not enough that you gave him two *dirhams* in charity?" Ibn 'Umar (ﷺ) said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Keep in touch with your father's friend and do not break your tie with him, or else Allāh (ﷻ) will extinguish your light.'" (Muslim)

A man asked the Prophet (ﷺ): "O Messenger of Allāh, is there any act of kindness or respect that I can do for my parents after they have died?" He (ﷺ) said:

"Yes, there are four things: praying and asking forgiveness for them; fulfilling their promises; respecting their friends; and keeping in contact with your relatives, for you have no relatives except through them."[1]

The highest form of love, faithfulness and respect that a child can show to his parents is to keep in touch with their friends, both during their lifetime and after their death. The true Muslim always seeks to strengthen the ties of friendship with those whom his parents love. He continues to care about his parents even after they have died, so he never forgets those old friendships and he maintains his ties with the circles of friends forged by his parents. Noble human feelings such as these, and sincere friendships, add beauty and enjoyment to life, and all of this depends on the presence of true Muslims in this world.

In the West, the child leaves his parents when he reaches the age of maturity and breaks the ties of kinship, never meeting his parents or showing any compassion or feelings towards his father or mother. The child goes his own way, scarcely looking back with love or respect to those who sacrificed so much

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said, 'You and your wealth are for your father. Your children are among your best earnings, so take from what your children earn.'" In another report he said: "Take it and enjoy it."

Imām al-Khaṭṭābī commented: "'He wants to take all my wealth' means that he wanted to take it all and leave nothing. It appears that the reason why the man asked this question was that he was having to spend on his father, and the amount required would consume all of his wealth, not just what he had to spare. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not give him permission to stop spending on his father, but told him, 'You and your wealth are for your father,' which means that if your father needed all of your wealth, he will take as much as he needs, as if he were taking from his own wealth. If you do not have any accumulated wealth, but you have an income, you should earn money and spend it on him."

[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

and are now facing the worst time of their life, after they gave the best days of their lives for their children who were just starting out on life.

What comparison can there be between the ungrateful, disobedient attitude of the child in the West towards his parents, and the respect, kindness, affection and love shown by the dutiful Muslim to his parents during their lifetime and after their death, and keeping in touch with their friends? Surely no other system or way of life has ever equalled the unique way in which Islām moulds people and instills humanity in them.

## How does he show kindness and respect towards them?

The Muslim who has been moulded by Islām is truly a man who is kind towards his parents. He shows them the utmost respect, stands up for them when they enter the room where he is sitting, kisses their hands, lowers his voice out of politeness when he speaks to them, is humble towards them, speaks to them in gentle tones, never lets harsh or hurtful words cross his tongue, and never treats them in a disrespectful manner, no matter what the circumstances. In all of this, he is following the command of Allāh (ﷻ):

﴾Your *Rabb* has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My *Rabb!* Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'﴿ (Qur'ān 17:23-24)

If parents are deviating from true Islām in some way, the dutiful Muslim son should, in this case, approach them in a gentle and sensitive manner, so as to dissuade them from their error. He should not condemn them harshly, but should try to convince them with solid proof, sound logic and wise words, until they turn to the truth in which he believes.

The wise Muslim does not forget that he is required to treat his parents well even if they are *mushrikūn*. While he is aware that *shirk* is the greatest of sins, he still fulfils his own responsibility, following the command of Allāh (ﷻ):

﴾And We have enjoined on man [to be good] to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: [hear the command], 'Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is [your final] Goal. But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice [and consideration], and follow the way of those who turn to Me [in love]: in the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth [and meaning] of all that you did.﴿ (Qur'ān 31:14-15)

Parents are the closest and most beloved of kin, but the bond with them, although it is regarded very highly, still comes second to *'aqīdah* (correct belief). If the parents are *mushrikūn* and tell their child to join them in their *shirk*, he must not obey them in that, for the Muslim must not obey a fellow-creature in disobeying the Creator. The demands of faith take precedence over all human

relationships. However, the child is still obliged to treat his parents with kindness and respect, and to take care of them.

Hence the true Muslim treats his parents with kindness and respect in all circumstances, doing whatever he can to make them happy, within the limits laid down by Allāh (ﷻ). He spares no effort to show honour and respect towards them, providing the best food, clothing and housing that he can afford, appropriate both to their social status and environment, and to Islāmic standards. Above all, he should speak kindly to them, present a pleasant and smiling face, and show love, tenderness, faithfulness and gratitude towards those who are most deserving of this good treatment: his parents.

The respect and duty of the true Muslim towards his parents extends even beyond their death: he should give money in charity on their behalf and pray often for them, as Allāh (ﷻ) says:

﴿And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My *Rabb!* Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.﴾ (Qur'ān 17:24)

This, then, is the nature of the Islāmic teaching concerning the respect and kindness to be shown towards parents, and the nature of the dutiful Muslim who is guided by it. But are Muslims today following this teaching after being overtaken by materialism and blinded by the glare of modern civilization? Nowadays our main concern is focused on wives and children, not on our parents. Caring for our parents comes after our concern for our wives and children, and parents may not even have that, unless their children happen to be among those who have that sense of duty and deep *taqwā*.

The modern Western social structures that have taken over the minds of many Muslims, do not include kindness and respect towards parents, caring for them in their old age and protecting them from neglect in their later years. This makes the man who is convinced of Western ideas think only of his wife and children, and he hardly ever takes the time to look back with love and kindness in gratitude to the generation that came before, those who stayed up so many nights to care for him and who spent so much on his upbringing and preparing him for life. When he thinks of a comfortable home, fine clothes, good food and travel, he thinks in terms of providing them for his wife and children; he barely gives a thought to the share his parents should have in these luxuries, when they are most in need of receiving them from the hand of their beloved son.

Treating parents with kindness and respect, giving generously to them, speaking to them gently and politely, and smiling at them... This is the essential attitude of the Muslim. Muslims should never abandon this attitude, no matter how complicated life gets, or how it develops, or how many imported habits they accumulate. This attitude is one, which will protect them from hard-heartedness and selfish behaviour, and will return them to their original character, humanity and faithfulness, so that they avoid sinking to the depths of selfishness and ingratitude as others have done. And, above all, this attitude will open the doors of Paradise to them.

# Chapter 4

## *The Muslim and His Wife*

### Islāmic View of Marriage and Woman

Marriage in Islām offers tranquillity to the soul and peace to the mind, so that man and woman may live together in an atmosphere of love, mercy, harmony, co-operation, mutual advice and tolerance, and lay the foundation for raising a Muslim family in a nurturing, sound environment.

The Holy Qur'ān has described, in the most moving and eloquent terms, this eternal, natural relationship between man and woman, which is filled with tranquillity, security, love, understanding and compassion:

﴾And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your [hearts]: verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.﴿ (Qur'ān 30:21)

Marriage is a union of souls, in the deepest sense. Allāh (ﷻ) joins these two souls together so that they may enjoy tranquillity and stability in a marital home filled with sincere love and compassionate mercy.

In Islām, the righteous woman is viewed as one of the joys of this life, and a great blessing to a man, for he comes home to her and relaxes after facing the struggles of life, and finds with her incomparable peace, comfort and pleasure. The Prophet (ﷺ) spoke only the truth said:

"This world is just temporary conveniences, and the best comfort in this word is a righteous woman." (Muslim)

Islām regards marriage very highly, and views femininity as something to be valued and cherished.

### The ideal Muslim's wife

On the basis of this view of marriage and of women, the Muslim is not attracted by the empty-headed attitude displayed by some girls nowadays. Rather, he is attracted by a sound Muslim personality, and he takes his time in choosing a partner for life, looking for a partner who has the right Islāmic characteristics which make for a stable and happy married life. Therefore he is not interested in the superficial physical beauty, grace and elegance that are the sole concern of empty-headed youngsters. While he may not ignore physical looks, he must look for strong religious beliefs and practice, intelligence, and good behaviour, following the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"A woman may be married for four things: for her wealth, for her noble descent, for her beauty or for her religion. Choose the one who is religious, lest your hands be rubbed with dust!" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Although the Prophet (ﷺ) advised the young Muslim to look for a religious wife, this does not mean that he should ignore his preferences regarding physical beauty. The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged seeing a woman before finalizing the marriage, so that a Muslim will not find himself trapped in a marriage with a woman he finds unattractive.

Al-Mughīrah ibn Sha'bah said:

"I got engaged to a woman at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). He asked me, 'Have you seen her?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Go and have a look at her, because it is more fitting that love and compatibility be established between you.'"[1]

A man who had got engaged to a woman of the Anṣār came to the Prophet (ﷺ), who asked him: "Have you seen her?" He said, "No." so the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered him to go and see her.[2]

The Prophet (ﷺ) emphasized, in more than one ḥadīth, the fact that beauty is one of the basic characteristics that a man should look for in a woman, besides the other, moral, characteristics that are desirable. Indeed, the two are inseparable. For example, he told Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه):

"Shall I tell you the most precious thing a man can have? It is a righteous wife: when he looks at her he is pleased, when he tells her to do something she obeys, and when he is away she is faithful and loyal to him."[3]

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked: 'Which woman is the best?' He said, 'The one who pleases him when he looks at her, who obeys him when he tells her to do something, and who does not do something he dislikes with regard to herself or to his wealth."[4]

This is the guidance given by the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding the personality of the woman who can bring happiness, tranquillity and stability to a man, and who can make a cheerful, pleasant and secure home in which to raise a brood of successful, courageous, intelligent children. The Prophet (ﷺ) insisted that marriage should be firmly built on a solid foundation, striking a balance between physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs, so that it will not be rocked by personality clashes or differences in attitude. Therefore the true Muslim who is guided by the sharī'ah of Allāh (ﷻ) in all his affairs, does not fall for the wiles of the "jezebels" who are the beautiful women of bad character; rather he (ﷺ) tells

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[1] Reported by al-Nisā'ī, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2] Reported by al-Nisā'ī and Ibn Mājah, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[3] Reported by al-Ḥākim, who said it is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the conditions of Bukhārī and Muslim.

[4] Reported by Imām Aḥmad in al-Musnad, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

people: "Beware of the 'jezebels'."[1]

## He follows the guidance of Islām in his married life

After marriage, the true Muslim adheres to the Islāmic injunction to treat his wife well. The Islāmic recommendations concerning women, and the way in which Islām encourages men to respect them, are nothing short of amazing.

Islām recommends men to treat women well, and gives them a status that they have never enjoyed in any other religion. So we see the Prophet (ﷺ) admonishing all men:

"Treat women kindly, for woman was created from a rib. The part of it that is most bent is the top. If you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you leave it alone it will remain bent. So treat women kindly." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to a report given by Bukhārī and Muslim, he (ﷺ) said:

"Woman is like a rib: if you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you enjoy her (or your relationship with her), you will do so in spite of her crookedness."

According to a report given by Muslim, he (ﷺ) said:

"Woman was created from a rib. She will never be straightforward and consistent for you in any way. If you enjoy her (or your relationship with her), you will do so in spite of her crookedness. If you try to straighten her, you will break her, and her breaking is her divorce."

This description given by the Prophet (ﷺ) eloquently describes the reality and nature of woman. She will not remain consistent in the way her husband may wish, but the Muslim husband must understand that this is her nature, the way she has been created. He should not try to straighten her in the way he is convinced is correct, but he should respect her unique feminine nature and accept her the way Allāh (ﷻ) made her, complete with the "crookedness" that means that she will not be as he wishes in some aspects. If he insists on straightening her and moulding her to his wishes, it will be like trying to straighten a bent rib: it will break in his hands, and the breaking of a woman is divorce (i.e., the matter will end in divorce).

When the Muslim husband truly follows this guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ), which is based on a deep understanding of the psychology and nature of women, he will tolerate his wife's mistakes and turn a blind eye to her faults, recognizing that these are part of her nature. Thus the marital home will be safe and calm, free from shouting or arguments.

We may note that in the ḥadīth quoted above, the Prophet (ﷺ) started with the words "Treat women kindly," then after analyzing the nature of woman, he ended with the same words: "Treat women kindly." How great was the concern of the Prophet (ﷺ) for women, and how deep was his understanding of their

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[1] "*Iyyākum wa khaḍrā' al-diman*" (literally, "Beware of the greens of dung") is a well-known saying in Arabic. It is a proverb, not a ḥadīth of the Prophet (ﷺ). [Author]

psychology! Does the sincere Muslim husband have any choice but to follow this guidance and put it into practice at every moment?

The Prophet's concern for women reached such an extent that he did not forget to remind Muslims to treat them kindly, in his farewell sermon (*khuṭbat al-wadā'*). This is the *khuṭbah* in which the Prophet (ﷺ) reiterated the essential points of Islām, when he realized that this was the last time he would stand and address the Muslims during Ḥajj. He did not omit to advise Muslims to treat women kindly, beginning his words concerning women with a warning that is indicative of his care and concern:

"... Interact with women kindly, for they are prisoners and you have no other power over them than that, if they are guilty of open lewdness, then refuse to share their beds, and beat them, but not severely, but if they return to obedience, (then) seek not against them means of annoyance. You have rights over your women and they have rights over you. Your right over them is that they should not entertain at your hearth anyone (or commit adultery with), and not to allow into your home anyone whom you dislike, and their right over you is that you should feed and clothe them well." [1]

This is good advice, in which every sincere Muslim husband recognizes the wisdom of the Prophet (ﷺ) in defining the rights and duties of husband and wife in a framework of mercy and compassion towards women which leaves no room for even thinking of oppressing or harming one's wife.

The Prophet (ﷺ) gave many recommendations concerning women, to the extent that he described the man who treats his wife well as being one of the best and among the élite of his Ummah:

"The believer who has the most perfect faith is the one whose behaviour is best, and the best of you are the ones who are best to their women." [2]

Some women came to the family of the Prophet (ﷺ) complaining about their husbands. So the Prophet (ﷺ) announced to the men:

"Many women have visited the family of Muhammad, complaining about their husbands. Verily those are not the best among you." [3]

True Islām is pre-eminent in its fairness and respect towards women, and in its recommendation to husbands to treat their wives well even if they dislike them. This is something which women have never enjoyed throughout their history, except in this religion. Allāh (ﷻ) says in the Qur'ān:

﴿... live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allāh brings about through it a great deal of good.﴾ (Qur'ān 4:19)

This *Āyah* touches the heart of the true Muslim, so that his anger is soothed and his dislike towards his wife is lessened. In this way Islām protects the sacred marriage bond from being exposed to the danger of turbulent emotions and the folly of changing moods. When a man came to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) and

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

[2] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

[3] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī and Ibn Mājah. Ibn Ḥijr said in *al-Iṣābah:* "Its isnād is *ṣaḥīḥ*."

told him that he wanted to divorce his wife because he disliked her, ‘Umar (ﷺ) said, “Woe to you! Are families only built on love? Where is your consideration and care?”

The marriage bond in Islām is of greater importance than emotional whims and rises above the pressures of crazy animal urges. The true Muslim possesses enough chivalry, nobility, courtesy, patience, generosity and strength of character to make him rise above any dislike of his wife in his dealings with her. Far be it from him to think only in terms of mindless animal instincts or making a profit!

The true Muslim cannot do other than obey his *Rabb*; so he treats his wife well even if he dislikes her, because he understands the words of his wise *Rabb* about the things that are hidden from him, and they are many. A man may dislike something and try to distance himself from it, when in fact it is full of goodness and blessing. The true Muslim knows how to love and how to hate. Love is not blind for him, neither does he go to extremes of dislike and hatred, but in either case his attitude is moderate and balanced.

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained that even if a husband dislikes his believing Muslim wife, she will still have some favourable characteristics which will please him, so he should not ignore the good side of her character and focus only on the negative aspects:

“No believing man should hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her characteristics, there will be others that do please him.” (Muslim)

## The true Muslim is an ideal husband

The true Muslim abides by the clear, unambiguous texts of the Qur’ān which command him to treat women fairly and decently. He cannot be other than an ideal husband, so his wife enjoys his gentle company and close companionship, no matter how long they stay together. When he comes home, he greets his wife and children with a smiling face and extends to them the blessed greeting that Allāh (ﷻ) has enjoined and made the distinctive greeting of Islām[1]:

﴾. . . But if you enter houses, salute each other — a greeting or blessing and purity as from Allāh . . .﴿ (Qur’ān 24:61)

The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged Anas (ﷺ) to use this greeting: “O my son, when you go home greet your family with *salām*: it will be a blessing for you and your family.”[2]

It is truly a great blessing for a man to meet his family with a pleasant greeting, for it contributes to a happy, friendly and pleasant atmosphere. He should lend a hand if he sees that his wife needs his help, and he should say some words of comfort if he feels that she is complaining of tiredness, weariness or boredom. He should make her feel that she is living with a strong, generous, tolerant husband who will

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[1] The words with which Muslims should greet one another are “*al-salām ‘alaykum*” (peace be upon you), not “Hi,” “Hello,” or “Good morning.”

[2] Reported by al-Tirmidhī who said: it is a *ḥasan gharīb* ḥadīth.

protect her and care for her, who cares about her and will meet all her legitimate needs as long as he is able.

He should also satisfy her femininity by making himself attractive to her — within Islāmic limits — and should give her a share of his time and interest. He should not let his study, work, hobbies, responsibilities or friends take up all of his time and keep him from her. Islām guarantees woman's right to enjoy her husband to the extent that it even tells the husband not to spend all his time in worship, which is the best and most honourable of deeds, lest the balance and equilibrium upon which this religion is based be disturbed. We see this in the report of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (ﷺ), who says that when the Prophet (ﷺ) learned of his overzealousness in worship, he said to him:

"Have I not heard that you fast all day and stay up all night in prayer?" 'Abdullah said, "That is true, O Messenger of Allāh." The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, sleep and get up. For your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Khawlah, the daughter of Ḥakīm, who was the wife of 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn (ﷺ), came to the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) wearing a tattered dress and looking unkempt. They asked her, "What is wrong with you?" She told them about her husband: "At night he stays up in prayer, and during the day he fasts." They told the Prophet (ﷺ) what she had said, so when he saw 'Uthmān ibn Maz'ūn, he admonished him and said, "Do you not have an example in me?" 'Uthmān said, "Of course, may Allāh (ﷻ) cause me to be sacrificed for you!" Later, she (Khawlah) came back wearing fine clothes and with a pleasant scent. According to another report, the Prophet (ﷺ) told him: "O 'Uthmān, monasticism has not been prescribed for us. Do you not have an example in me? For by Allāh (ﷻ), I am the one out of all of you who fears Allāh (ﷻ) the most and keeps most strictly within His bounds."[1]

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to instill this guidance in his Companions and showed them how to achieve fairness and balance between their spiritual lives and their private lives with their spouses, until this fairness and balance became second nature to them. Then they would encourage one another to adhere to it, and would appeal to the Prophet (ﷺ) if one of their number sought to go beyond the limits and was becoming extreme in his asceticism, self-denial and worship.

Imām Bukhārī narrated that Abū Juḥayfah (ﷺ) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) established brotherhood between Salmān and Abūl-Dardā'. Salmān visited Abūl-Dardā' and saw Umm al-Dardā' looking unkempt. He asked her, 'What is the matter with you?' She said, 'Your brother Abūl-Dardā' has no need of this world.' Abūl-Dardā' came and made some food for him, and told him: 'Eat; I am fasting.' Salmān said, 'I will not eat until you eat,' so he ate. That night, Abūl-Dardā' wanted to spend the night in prayer, but Salmān told him to sleep, so he went to sleep. Then he wanted to get up, but Salmān again told him to sleep. In the last part of the night, Salmān told him, 'Now get up.' So they prayed, and Salmān told him: 'Your *Rabb* has a right over you, your soul has a right over you, and your wife has a right over you, so fulfil your duty to each one who has a right over

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[1] See *al-Ḥilyah*, 1/106; *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/394; *al-Kanz*, 8/305.

you.' Abūl-Dardā' came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and told him about what had happened, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Salmān is right.'"

The conscientious Muslim does not neglect to relieve the tedium of routine life with his wife, so he spices their daily life with a little gentle humour and playfulness from time to time. In doing so, he follows the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) whose whole life is the highest example for us. Although he was constantly busy with the overwhelming task of laying the foundations of Islām, building the Muslim Ummah, directing the army in jihād, and numerous other concerns, he did not let that keep him from being an ideal husband to his wives, treating them in the best possible way, with a smiling face and a touch of gentle humour.

An example is the report given by 'Ā'ishah (رضي الله عنها) who said:

"I came to the Prophet (ﷺ) with some *ḥarīrah* (a dish made with flour and milk) that I had cooked for him, and told Sawdah (رضي الله عنها) — as the Prophet (ﷺ) was sitting between me and her - 'Eat.' She refused, so I said, 'Either you eat, or I will fill your face!' She still refused, so I put my hand in the *ḥarīrah* and daubed her face with it. The Prophet (ﷺ) laughed, put some *ḥarīrah* in her hand, and told her: 'Do the same to her!'" In another report: "He lowered his knee (moved out of the way) so that she could get her own back on me, then she took some from the plate and wiped my face with it, and the Prophet (ﷺ) smiled."[1]

Is this not an example of tolerance and an easy-going nature which makes a wife happy through a humorous and light-hearted attitude?

'Ā'ishah also reported that once, when she went on a journey with the Prophet (ﷺ), she challenged him to a race, and won. Later, when she had gained weight, she raced him again, but this time he won, and told her, "This is for that."[2]

The generous-hearted Prophet (ﷺ) was so keen to make his beloved young wife feel happy that he would call her to enjoy some innocent kinds of entertainment that would gladden her heart. 'Ā'ishah reports that on one occasion:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) was sitting, and he heard some noise from people and children outside. There was a group of people gathered around some Abyssinians who were dancing. He said, 'O 'Ā'ishah, come and see!' I put my cheek on his shoulder and looked through the gap. Then he said, 'O 'Ā'ishah, have you had enough, have you had enough?' I said, 'No,' just to see how much I meant to him, and I saw him shifting his weight from one foot to the other" (i.e. he was tired, but he was willing to stay as long as she wanted to watch the spectacle.)[3]

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[1] Al-Haythamī, 4/316; *al-Muntakhab* 4/393; *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 7/302. Al-Haythamī said: It was narrated by Abū Ya'lā, and its narrators are those who narrated in *ṣaḥīḥ* (Bukhārī), except for Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Alqamah, whose ḥadīth is *ḥasan*.

[2] A *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth, narrated by Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd.

[3] Reported by al-Nisā'ī via Yazīd ibn Rumān from 'Ā'ishah. See also different reports from her in *Fatḥ al-Bārī, Bāb al-'Īdayn* (chapter on the two Eids).

In another report, 'Ā'ishah said:

"By Allāh (ﷻ), I saw the Prophet (ﷺ) standing at the door of my room, when some Abyssinians were playing with spears in the mosque. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) screened me with his cloak so that I could watch the spear-play over his shoulder. He stayed there for my sake, until I had seen enough. So pay attention to young girls' need for entertainment." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

When he sees the example of the Prophet's kind behaviour, generosity and good humour towards his wives, the true Muslim cannot but treat his wife kindly and gently, with an easy-going attitude, so long as this is within the limits of permissible and innocent entertainment.

The true Muslim does not overreact and become angry for trivial reasons, as many ignorant husbands do, creating uproar if their wives offer them food that is not to their liking, or their meal is a little late, or any of the other reasons which often cause an inordinate amount of anger, arguments and trouble between the spouses. The Muslim who is truly following the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) always remembers aspects of his character that remind him to be generous, kind and tolerant. So he remembers that one of the characteristics of the Prophet (ﷺ) is that "he never criticized food. If he liked it, he ate it, and if he did not like it, he simply left it." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

And he remembers that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked his family for some simple food he could eat with bread. They told him, "We have nothing apart from vinegar." He asked them to bring it and said, "How good a simple food is vinegar, how good a simple food is vinegar." (Muslim)

Let them listen to this ḥadīth, those foolish husbands whose eyes flash with anger at their wives' mistakes, when their food is a little late or not to their liking. Their poor wives may have genuine, pressing reasons for making these mistakes, but these husbands become angry without caring to know those reasons, on the basis of an incorrect understanding of the phrase "men are *qawwāmūn* over women"!

The true Muslim husband does not stop at showing kindness and generosity towards his wife, but he extends his respect and kindness towards her decent (female) friends. This is in accordance with the practice of the Prophet (ﷺ). 'Ā'ishah narrated:

"An old woman came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and he smiled at her, showed her respect, and asked her, 'How are you? How have you been doing?' She answered, 'I am fine, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allāh.'" When she had left, 'Ā'ishah said, "Why did you welcome this old woman so warmly, in a way that you do not welcome anyone else?" The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "She used to come and visit us when Khadījah was alive. Do you not know that honouring the ties of friendship is part of faith?" [1]

A wife may become angry for any reason, and keep away from her husband, making him feel her anger. In this case, the Muslim husband responds with tolerance and kindness, based on his deep insight into the psychology and nature of woman, as the Prophet (ﷺ) used to treat his wives whenever they were angry with him and kept away from him all day until night fell.

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[1] Reported by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*; he said it is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the condition of Bukhārī and Muslim.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ) said: “We Quraysh used to have control over our women. When we came to Madīnah we found a people whose women had control over them, and our women began to learn from their women. I used to live in al-‘Awālī, among Banu Umayyah ibn Zayd. One day my wife was angry with me, and was arguing with me. I did not like this, but she told me, ‘Do you not like me arguing with you? By Allāh (ﷻ), the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) argue with him. They get angry and keep away from him all day, until night falls!’ So I went to see Ḥafṣah and asked her, ‘Do you argue with the Prophet (ﷺ)?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ I asked her, ‘Do you get angry and keep away from him all day until night falls?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘The one who does that is doomed to loss! Do you not fear the anger of Allāh (ﷻ) on the account of the anger of His Prophet? Soon you will be condemned! Do not argue with the Messenger of Allāh, and do not ask him for anything. Ask me for whatever you need.’” (Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nisā’ī) ‘Umar came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and told him about what had happened in his house, and the conversation he had with Ḥafṣah, and the Prophet (ﷺ) smiled.

The Muslim should develop this tolerant attitude, so that he will be following the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) in his behaviour and deeds. Then he will be living proof that Islām is the religion of a superior lifestyle; and that the misery, disintegration, confusion and anxiety that individuals, families and societies are suffering from are caused by man’s ignorance and misconceptions of the noble values promulgated by Islām. These are precious principles which, if adopted by the husband, would put an end to arguments and divisions in family life, and would bring peace, stability, happiness and security to the home.

## One of the most successful husbands

Hence the smart Muslim husband is one of the most successful husbands ever, and the most beloved to a faithful, pure, righteous wife, because of his adherence to the guidance of Islām. He has a deep and compassionate understanding of her nature and psychology, and he directs her towards the straight path of Islām, which is in complete harmony with the true nature of mankind. He recognizes her inclinations, desires and moods, and tries to reconcile between them and the ideal life and behaviour he wants for her, while never forgetting for an instant that she has been created from a bent rib, and straightening a bent rib is impossible.

## He understands his wife and respects her feelings

The true Muslim always understands his wife and respects her feelings. He does not criticize her family or any of her relations in front of her, out of respect for her feelings. In return, she respects his feelings and does not do or say anything that may adversely affect any member of his family.

He does not disclose any secret that she has entrusted to him, or spread any story that she has told him in confidence, for carelessness in such matters all too often explodes into conflict between the spouses and extinguishes the love between them. The sincere Muslim husband is protected from all of that, so long as he continues to follow the guidance of Islām.

## He helps her to make up for her failings and weaknesses

The sincere Muslim husband tries to make up for what his wife lacks, if he feels that she is lacking in knowledge or manners. He does this in the gentlest, kindest and most positive manner. If he encounters defiance or wilful deviance on her part, he brings her back to the straight and narrow in a gentle, humane and intelligent manner, avoiding harsh criticism or rebuking her in front of people, no matter what the reason. The most hurtful thing for a woman is that someone should hear her being reprimanded or witness her being scolded. The true Muslim is the most sensitive and respectful towards the feelings of others.

## He knows how to strike a balance between pleasing his wife and treating his mother with due kindness and respect

The sincere Muslim husband draws upon his intelligence, compassion and strength of character in his dealings with both his wife and his mother, in such a way that he does not offend either of them. So he cannot be disobedient towards his mother or oppressive towards his wife. Rather, he recognizes his mother's rights and treats her in the best possible way, while also recognizing his wife's rights. He does not detract from his wife's rights in the course of fulfilling his duty towards his mother and taking care of her. The truly sincere Muslim is able to do this, as long as he is truly conscious of Allāh (ﷻ) (i.e., has *taqwā*) and follows the guidance and teachings of Islām, which treat both mother and wife with fairness and give each her due status.

## He fully understands his role as a protector and maintainer (*qawwām*) of his wife

With such good attitudes and gentle treatment, the Muslim husband wins the heart of his wife, so she does not disobey him in anything. Therefore the Muslim man has been given the position of *qawwām* over women, because of the characteristics which Islām instils in him, the qualifications it has given him and the conditions and limits it has imposed on him:

﴾Men are the protectors and maintainers [*qawwāmūn*] of women, because of Allāh has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means...﴿ (Qur'ān 4:34)

This position of *qawwām* brings with it some inconveniences, for it gives men responsibilities. The man is completely responsible for his wife:

"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those under his care. A ruler is a shepherd; a man is the shepherd of his family; a woman is the shepherd of her husband's house and children. For each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for those under his care." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

This responsibility applies to every individual in an Islāmic society, in which everyone is responsible in one way or another, because according to Islām, life is a serious matter, not something to be taken

lightly.

Just as Islām has enjoined good treatment of woman and raised her status, so it has also commanded her to understand her role in life, and to stay within the limits of the Sharī'ah, so that she may better fulfil her role in life as a partner to man in bringing up the next generation and making life more pleasant and enjoyable.

Similarly, just as Islām has required man to treat his wife kindly and take care of her properly, so it has commanded the wife to obey him within the limits of permissibility, fairness and justice. This obedience is most strongly emphasized, as is illustrated by the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"If I were to order anyone to prostrate to anyone else, I would have ordered the woman to prostrate to her husband." [1]

Indeed, he said that the husband's satisfaction with her would be a cause of her entering Paradise:

"Any woman who dies, and her husband is pleased with her, will enter Paradise." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

He assured the defiant, rebellious woman that the angels would heap curses upon her until she goes back to her husband:

"If a woman stays away from her husband's bed, the angels will curse her until morning." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The concern of Islām to affirm man's position of *qawwām* over women and reinforce her obligation to obey and please him, goes as far as forbidding her to fast at times other than Ramaḍān or to receive any guests without his permission:

"The woman is not permitted to fast when her husband is present, without his permission, or to invite anyone into his house without his permission." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Islām gave the husband this right to be *qawwām* over his wife so that he will be a real man, knowing how to steer the ship of family life towards the shore of safety and guidance. Islām warns all men against the trial and temptation (*fitnah*) of women, which may make them heedless and weak, and lessen their religious commitment, so that they turn a blind eye to the waywardness and unIslāmic behaviour of their wives. In such a case a husband has no say: his wife is controlling everything in the home, so that he dare not disobey her, or answer her back, or refuse any of her whims. The Prophet (ﷺ) was right when he said that this is the most damaging of trials and temptations that a man can be faced with:

"There will be no *fitnah* after my death that is worse for men than the *fitnah* of women." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Muslim husband is a man who is not weak in dealing with the trial of having a wayward wife, no matter how difficult that *fitnah* is. He gently makes it clear to her that no matter how much he loves

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

her, he loves Allāh (ﷻ) and the Prophet more, and his desire to please Allāh (ﷻ) is stronger than his feelings for her:

﴾Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates or your kindred; the wealth that you have gained; the commerce in which you fear a decline; or the dwellings in which you delight — are dearer to you than Allāh, or His Messenger, or the striving in His cause — then wait until Allāh brings about His Decision: and Allāh guides not the rebellious.﴿ (Qur'ān 9:24)

In this way, the female waywardness which we see in many so-called Muslim homes will be done away with. The man who sees his wife, daughters and sisters going out in the street with make-up, uncovered heads and bare arms, clothed but seeming naked, and does nothing to stop this disobedience of Islām, has surely lost his manhood, abandoned Islām and earned the wrath of Allāh (ﷻ). There is no way out of his predicament but sincere repentance which will wake him up, restore his manhood and set him back on the straight path.

Islām has set out standards for women, and has defined the kind of clothing she should wear when she goes out in the street or appears in from of men who are not-maḥram. This type of clothing is known as *ḥijāb*. The Muslim woman who has been nurtured in pure Islām and has grown up in its protective atmosphere accepts this *ḥijāb* willingly and with a deep sense of conviction, knowing that it is from Allāh (ﷻ), and that it is not a tyranny designed by men to satisfy their egotistical desires to control women, or a custom invented during the decadent Umawī (Umayyad) period, as is claimed by those worthless fools who have no sound proof from the Qur'ān whatsoever.

In a report narrated by Bukhārī, 'Ā'ishah said: "May Allāh have mercy on the early muhājir women. When Allāh (ﷻ) revealed: ﴾. . .they should draw their veils over their bosoms. . .﴿ (Qur'ān 24:31) they tore their aprons and covered their heads and faces with them." In another report, also given by Bukhārī, she said: "They cut their waist-sheets at the edges and covered their heads and faces with the cut pieces."

Ṣafiyyah bint Shaybah said:

"While we were with 'Ā'ishah we mentioned the women of Quraysh and how good they were. 'Ā'ishah said: 'The women of Quraysh are good but by Allāh (ﷻ) I have never seen any better than the women of the Anṣār or any more convinced of the Book of Allāh (ﷻ) or with a deeper faith in the Revelation. When *Sūrat al-Nūr* was revealed — ﴾... they should draw their veils over their bosoms...﴿ — the men turned to their wives, daughters, sisters and other female relatives and recited these words to them. Not one of them failed to take her decorated wrapper and wrap it around her head and face, in acceptance of and belief in what Allāh (ﷻ) had revealed. The next morning they were behind the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) wrapped up in their veils, looking as if they had black crows on their heads.'"[1]

Many Allāh (ﷻ) have mercy on the women of the Anṣār: how strong was their faith, how sincere was their Islām and how beautiful was their response to the Truth when it was revealed! Every woman who truly believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger cannot do other than to adhere to the distinctive Islāmic dress, regardless of whatever nakedness and *tabarruj* (wanton display) surrounds her. I remember a veiled

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[1] See *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, commentary on *ṣaḥīḥ* Bukhārī.

Muslim student at the University of Damascus whose attitude was no less commendable than that of the women of the Anṣār; when a visiting journalist asked her about her *ḥijāb* and why she was putting up with it in the heat of summer, she quoted: ﴿...Say: 'The Fire of Hell is fiercer in heat...'﴾ (Qur'ān 9:81)

It is pure, sincere Muslim girls like this who will establish Muslim families, raise the next generation in a sound way and fill society with strong, productive men. Nowadays there are many such girls, *al-ḥamdulillah*!

The sincere Muslim is responsible for his womenfolk's adherence to the Islāmic teachings regarding her going out, and the *ḥijāb* which is the badge of the Muslim woman. The day when a husband lets his wife or his environment take over and dispenses with this Islāmic ruling without being able to stand up to them, is the day he says good-bye to both his religion and his manhood.

The husband's responsibility for his wife does not stop with her outward appearance, but also includes her worship and conduct. He is responsible for her if she omits some act of worship, or if she neglects or deliberately ignores her duties towards Allāh (ﷻ). He is responsible for her good behaviour and completion of her duties. Any shortcomings on her part will detract from her husband's manhood, diminish his Islām and damage the role of *qawwām* with which Allāh (ﷻ) has honoured him.

Islām considers women to be a trust which has been given to men for safe-keeping. As the wife is usually influenced by her husband, he may take her with him to Paradise or lead her to Hell. Therefore Allāh (ﷻ) ordered the believing men to protect both themselves and their families from the Fire and gave a terrifying picture of the awful fate that awaits them if they neglect their responsibilities towards their wives and families and fail to compel them to adhere to the truth:

﴿O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are [appointed] angels stern [and] severe, who flinch not [from executing] the Commands they receive from Allāh, but do [precisely] what they are commanded.﴾ (Qur'ān 66:6)

The role of *qawwām* over women which Islām gives to men cannot truly be fulfilled unless the husband is a successful leader of his family. The Muslim husband does not assert his manhood through roughness, cruelty, violence and harsh words. This is the manhood of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*); Islāmic manhood is something else altogether. The Islāmic ideal of manhood is: a strong and likeable personality; a noble attitude; tolerance and forgiveness of minor mistakes; strong adherence to the laws of Allāh (ﷻ) and determination to apply them to every member of his family; brilliant leadership in guiding his family to the truth; generosity without being extravagant; a thorough understanding of his responsibilities in this world and the next; and a clear idea of the ideal Muslim home. These are the characteristics of the true Muslim as Islām wants him to be.

# Chapter 5

## *The Muslim and His Children*

### Introduction

Children are the apple of a man's eye, the source of great joy and companionship. They make life sweet and, after Allāh (ﷻ), they are the ones on whom he pins his hopes. Their blessing brings *rizq*, mercy and an abundance of reward.

But this depends on the children having a good, solid upbringing, which will make them respectful, kind, and a source of happiness. If a man's children have these good attributes then they will truly be joys of this life, as Allāh (ﷻ) described them in the Qur'ān:

﴾Wealth and sons are allurements [joys] of the life of this world . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 18:46)

For this reason the Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray for those whom he loved, that Allāh (ﷻ) would grant them wealth and children in abundance. Anas (رضي الله عنه) reported that he entered upon the Prophet (ﷺ) with his mother and maternal aunt. The Prophet (ﷺ) led them in prayer, then he prayed (made *du'ā'*) for them. Umm Anas said, "O Messenger of Allāh, your little servant, pray for him." So the Prophet (ﷺ) prayed for him, and at the end of his *du'ā'* said: "O Allāh (ﷻ), grant him wealth and children in abundance, and bless him." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

But if the parents neglect their children's upbringing, the results will be disastrous. Their children will be a source of annoyance, frustration and constant concern, not to mention nights of lost sleep and days of worry.

### He understands his great responsibility towards his children

The true Muslim understands his great responsibility towards the children he has brought into this world, as the Qur'ān tells him:

﴾O you who believe! Save yourselves and your family from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 66:6)

He also appreciates the responsibility that the Prophet (ﷺ) has placed upon him:

"Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock; a woman is the shepherd in the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock; the servant is the shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock."

(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Islām has placed a burden of responsibility on the shoulders of all people, from which none may be excused. Above all, parents are responsible for providing their children with a sound Islāmic education and upbringing, based on the noble characteristics which the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned that he had been sent to complete and spread among people:

"I have only been sent to make righteous behaviour complete."[1]

There is no greater proof of the gravity of parents' responsibility to bring their children up to obey Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger, than the verdict of the *'ulamā'* that every family should heed the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"Instruct your children to pray when they are seven years of age, and hit them if they do not pray when they are ten."[2]

Every family which is aware of this ḥadīth but the parents do not teach their children to pray when they reach seven or hit them if they do not do so when they reach ten, is a family that is failing in its duty and neglecting its children. These parents are sinners who are responsible before Allāh (ﷻ) for this failure and neglect.

The home is the first environment in which these little ones grow: it is the milieu in which their inclinations, attitudes and personalities are formed. This explains the importance of the parents' role in nurturing their young ones and paying equal attention to their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

## He uses the best methods in bringing them up

The true Muslim parent — whether father or mother — understands the psychology of his or her children and knows how to deal with them, using the best and most effective methods of parenting and upbringing. He endears himself to them in all kinds of ways, and gets close to them, according to their age and mental levels, so he plays with them, praises them, jokes with them and tells them words of love and care which make them happy. Then they will love him, and accept his direction eagerly. When they obey him, it will be from the heart, for there is a great difference between the obedience which is based on love, respect and trust, and that which is based on violence and cruelty. The former is lasting obedience, while the latter is shallow and baseless, and will quickly vanish when the violence and cruelty reach extreme levels.

Some people think that if the father comes down to his children's level and interacts closely with them, this will diminish his paternal status in their eyes and undermine his parenting efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth, for this kind of approach is the most efficient method of raising children properly,

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Imām Mālik in *al-Muwattā',* and Imām Aḥmad in *al-Musnad.*

[2] Reported by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

and is promoted by modern experts. It is also the method promoted by the Prophet (ﷺ) fifteen hundred years ago, and clearly demonstrated by him in word and deed.

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to line up 'Abdullah, 'Ubaydullah and Kuthayyir, the sons of al-'Abbās (ﷺ) and say: "Whoever reaches me first, I will give him such-and-such." So they would race towards him and jump on his back and chest, kissing him.[1]

Bukhārī, in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and al-Ṭabarānī reported from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (ﷺ) took the hand of al-Ḥasan (ﷺ) or al-Ḥusayn (ﷺ), then put his feet on his foot and said, "Climb up."

There is no clearer demonstration of the spirit of the great educator than in the way he carried al-Ḥasan (ﷺ) and al-Ḥusayn (ﷺ), and treated them with love and care, thus setting an example for fathers and grandfathers everywhere, no matter how great their status and influence, to treat these tender young shoots in the most gentle and caring way. This may be seen in the ḥadīth narrated by Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī from Shaddād:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) went out carrying al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn, and when he came forward to lead the prayer, he put the child down and commenced the prayer. He prostrated himself and stayed in that position for a long time. I raised my head and saw the child on his back, so I returned to my prostration. When he had finished praying, the people said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, you prostrated for such a long time.' He said, 'My child was riding on my back, and I did not like to disturb him until he had had enough.'"[2]

The Muslim should be in the habit of being involved with his children, treating them with love and kindness and joking with them, as much as he can whenever he finds the opportunity, so that their hearts will be filled with happiness.

## He demonstrates his love and affection for them

One of his primary paternal duties is to demonstrate his love, mercy and affection towards his children so that they will grow up confident, positive, optimistic and with high levels of self-esteem.

Compassion is a basic Islāmic characteristic, and was one of the most prominent characteristics of the Prophet (ﷺ), as Anas (ﷺ) told us:

"I never saw anyone who was more compassionate towards children than the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). His son Ibrāhīm was in the care of a wet-nurse in the hills around Madīnah. He would go there, and we would go with him, and he would enter the house, pick up his son and kiss him, then come back." (Muslim)

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad. Al-Ḥāfiz said in *al-Tahdhīb* (8/421) that its *isnād* is *mursal jayyid.*

[2] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

The Prophet's mercy and love towards the Muslim children included little ones at play. Anas (ﷺ) reports that whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by a group of boys he would smile fondly and greet them. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

An example of his enduring educational wisdom is the advice:

"He is not one of us who does not show compassion to our little ones and recognize the rights of our elders." [1]

Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) kissed al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, and al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis said: 'I have ten children, and I have never kissed any of them.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ), this great educator, always sought to instill the quality of mercy and compassion in people's hearts, and to awaken their potential for love and affection, which are the most basic of human characteristics.

One day a Bedouin came and asked the Prophet (ﷺ), "Do you kiss your sons? We do not." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "What can I do for you if Allāh (ﷻ) has removed mercy from your heart?" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

'Ā'ishah (ﷺ) reports:

"Whenever Fāṭimah came into the room, the Prophet (ﷺ) would stand up, welcome her, kiss her and offer her his seat, and whenever he came into the room, she would stand up, take his hand, welcome him, kiss him and offer him her seat. When she came to see him during his final illness, he welcomed her and kissed her." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

In the light of this guidance, the true Muslim cannot be stern towards his children and treat them in a rough or mean fashion, even if it is his nature to be grim and reserved, because this religion, with its enlightenment and guidance, softens hearts and awakens feelings of love and affection. So children are a part of us, going forth into the world, as the poet said:

"Our children are our hearts, walking among us on the face of the earth,/ if even a little breeze touches them, we cannot sleep for worrying about them." [2]

Parents should be filled with love, affection and care, and willing to make sacrifices and do their best for their children.

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim. Its *isnād* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

[2] These lines by the poet Hittān al-Mu'allī are to be found in *Sharḥ al-Ḥamāsah* by *al-Tabrīzī*, 1/275.

## He spends on them, willingly and generously

Islām does not rely only on the parents' natural instincts to care for their children, because sometimes parents may be reluctant to give up some of life's pleasures for the sake of their children, or else hard times and poverty may cause parents to complain about the heavy burden of expenses. So Islām reinforces the parents' natural instincts to care for their children by promising them a great reward, which encourages them to make sacrifices and helps them to bear their poverty.

Umm Salamah said:

"I said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, will I be rewarded for what I spend on the children of Salamah? I am not going to abandon them in any case, for they are my children too.' He said, 'Yes, you will be rewarded for what you spend on them.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Abū Mas'ūd al-Badrī (ﷺ) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'When a man spends on his family with the intention of pleasing Allāh (ﷻ), then it will be counted as ṣadaqah (charity) on his part.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Islām considers spending on one's wife and children to be one of the best kinds of spending, one of the deeds which will bring the greatest rewards. This is borne out by the ḥadīth which Muslim reported from Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ), who said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Money you spend for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), money you spend to free a slave, money you give in charity to the poor, and money you spend on your family . . . The greatest in reward of all of these is spending on your family." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

In another report, narrated by Muslim, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The best money a man can spend is money he spends on his children, money he spends on his mount for the purpose of jihād, and money he spends on his friends for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)."

The true Muslim is happy to spend on his family, because he is certain that whatever he spends on them and others, with the intention of pleasing Allāh (ﷻ), will bring him reward, even the morsel of food which he may raise to his wife's mouth in a light-hearted gesture of affection. This is clear from the ḥadīth narrated by Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (ﷺ), that the Prophet (ﷺ) told him:

"You will never spend anything for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) without there being a reward for it, even the food which you put in your wife's mouth." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The true Muslim cannot abandon his children and leave them in poverty and misery, when he hears the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) threatening men who neglect their responsibilities towards their families and warning them of the worst punishment and torment in the Hereafter:

"It is sin enough for a man to forsake those who are under his care." (Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, *et al*)

## He does not discriminate between sons and daughters in his affection and spending

Some people are disappointed to have daughters, and wish that Allāh (ﷻ) had given them only sons. They do not know of the great reward which Allāh (ﷻ) has promised to the father who has been given daughters, and accepts them, takes care of them, gives them a good upbringing, and showers love and affection upon them. If they knew the reward that awaits the caring, merciful father of girls, they would feel jealous of him and would want that for themselves too.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"Whoever has three daughters, and is patient with them, gives them food and drink, and clothes them from his earnings, they will be for him a shield against the Fire of the Day of Resurrection."[1]

In another report, he (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever has three daughters and shelters them, provides what they need and shows compassion towards them, will certainly deserve Paradise." A man among the people asked, "And if they are two, O Messenger of Allāh?" And he said, "Yes, even if they are two."

How could any man resent bringing up daughters and spending on them when he hears of the rewards and blessings that Allāh (ﷻ) has promised him?

Islām, this practical religion which recognizes the realities of people's lives in all times and places, recognizes the fact that a daughter may get divorced and return to her father's house, and that her father may be in straitened circumstances with a low income or many other children to care for, so it offers him the comfort that will soothe his troubled spirit and ease his stress. Islām tells this father that whatever he spends on his daughter who has come home to him is one of the greatest acts of charity and one of the deeds that will bring him closest to Allāh (ﷻ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said to Surāqah ibn Ju'sham: "Shall I not tell you about the greatest form of charity?" He said, "Of course, O Messenger of Allāh." He said, "Your daughter who has come back to you and has no other breadwinner."[2]

What comparison can there be between the great affection and love with which children in the Muslim world are nurtured, and the harsh life suffered by children in the West, where when a child, boy or girl, who has barely reached the age of eighteen, leaves the family home to face the stark realities of life and to struggle to earn a living before he is ready to or before he has had enough love and support from his family? There is a huge difference between the laws of Allāh (ﷻ), which bring happiness to mankind, and the inadequate laws of man which only cause suffering. Not surprisingly, in western countries, as a result of these materialistic laws, there are armies of promiscuous young men and hordes of unfortunate young unmarried mothers, and their numbers are increasing daily.

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[1] Narrated by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

## He is alert to everything that may have an influence on them

The smart Muslim father keeps his eyes open as far as his children are concerned. He knows what they are reading and writing, the hobbies they have chosen or which he may have encouraged them to follow, without them realizing it, the friends with whom they spend most of their time, and the places they go in their spare time. He knows all of this without his children feeling that he is watching them. If he finds anything objectionable in their reading-material or hobbies, or finds that they are hanging around with undesirable friends, or going to unsuitable places, or taking up bad habits like smoking, or wasting time and energy on *ḥarām* games that make them accustomed to trivialities and idle pursuits, he puts them straight in a gentle and wise manner, and persuades them to return to the straight and narrow.

Every new baby is born in a state of *fiṭrah* (the natural state of man), and it is parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, as is mentioned in the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth narrated by Bukhārī. Hence the parents' responsibility regarding the upbringing of the child and the formation of his personality is clear.

The books which children spend time reading should be broadening their minds, building their personalities and offering them good examples; they should not be corrupting them and extinguishing the flame of goodness in their hearts.

Hobbies should nurture the positive aspects of the children and instill in them good taste, not encourage them to follow falsehood. Their friends should be of the type who will keep them on the Straight Path and lead them to Paradise, not those who will corrupt them and lead them to Hell. How many people have been brought to the slippery slope of destruction and perdition by their friends, when their fathers were unaware of what was happening to their own children! How wise are the words of the poet 'Adiyy ibn Zayd al-'Abādī concerning friends:

"If you are among people, then make friends with the best of them./
Do not make friends with the worst of them lest you become as bad as he is./
Do not ask about the man, but ask about his friend, for every person is influenced by his friends."[1]

The true Muslim father takes notice of his children's books, magazines, hobbies, school, teachers, clubs, media interests, and everything that may have an impact on their personalities, minds, souls and faith. He should intervene when necessary, either to encourage or to put a stop to something, so that the children's upbringing will not be affected by corruption or sickness.

Hence we can explain the success of some families in raising their children, and the failure of others. The former feel responsible towards their children and take care of them properly, so the children become good for the family and the community at large; the latter do not feel this responsibility, so they neglect their children, and the children become bad for their family and the community at large, a source of distress in their life and after death. Allāh (ﷻ) has spoken the truth:

﴿. . . Truly, among your wives and your children are [some that are] enemies to yourselves, so beware of them! . . .﴾ (Qur'ān 64:14)

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[1] *Dīwān 'Adiyy*, p. 107.

Children would not have turned against their parents if their parents had kept to the right path, recognized their responsibilities towards their children and done their duty as they should.

## He equally treats all his children

One of the elements of wise upbringing is for the parents to treat all their children equally, and not to favour one of them over the others in any way. The child who feels that he is treated fairly and that he and his brothers are equal, will grow up with a healthy self-esteem, free from feelings of inferiority; he will not hate his brother, or eat his heart out with jealousy, but will be content, tolerant, kind and caring towards others. This is what Islām encourages and orders parents to do.

Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr (ﷺ):

"My father brought me to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, 'I have given this son of mine a slave I have.' The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him, 'Have you given each of your children the same?' He said, 'No,' so the Prophet (ﷺ) told him: 'Then take the slave back.'"

According to another report Nu‘mān said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, 'Have you done the same for all your children?' (My father) said, 'No,' so the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Fear Allāh (ﷻ) and treat all of your children equally.' So my father went and took back his gift."

According to a third report:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, 'O Bishr, do you have any other children?' He said, 'Yes.' The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, 'Will you give a similar gift to each of them?' He said, 'No.' So the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Do not ask me to witness this, because I do not want to witness unfairness.' Then he added, 'Would you not like all of your children to treat you with equal respect?' [Bishr] said, 'Of course.' The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: 'So do not do it.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Therefore the Muslim who fears Allāh (ﷻ) treats all his children with equal fairness, and does not favour one above the other in giving gifts, spending money on him or in the way he treats him. So all of them will pray for him, love him and treat him with kindness and respect.

## He instills good behaviour and attitudes in them

When children's hearts are thus filled with contentment and goodness, the father can then raise them up to the level of high morals and noble human virtues. So he instills in them good manners such as caring for others, helping the weak, being kind to relatives, respecting elders, being merciful to the young, cheerfully doing good and striving to spread justice among people. A person cannot give that which he

does not have. The man was right who said, "Righteousness comes from Allāh (ﷻ) and good manners come from parents."[1]

The smart Muslim father understands his children's psychology and knows how to instill wisdom and good attitudes in them, using the best methods of parenting in order to do so, such as setting a good example, coming down to their level, treating them well, and cheerfully showing mercy, humility, love, interest, encouragement, fairness, advice, correction and guidance. He is lenient towards them without being weak, and is strict without being cruel. Thus the children will grow up in an atmosphere of care, compassion and affection, that can only produce caring, kind, loyal and righteous children whose personalities are strong, who are willing to give and to shoulder their responsibilities. This is the norm for families who raise their children on Islāmic principles and the teachings of the Qur'ān:

﴾. . . [We take our] colour from Allāh, and who is better than Allāh at colouring ? . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 2:138 — Pickthall's translation)

[1] Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 92.

# Chapter 6

## The Muslim and His Relatives

### (Arḥām):

A Muslim's kindness, respect and good treatment are not limited just to his parents, spouse and children, but extend to his relatives, all of whom he should treat well. In the Qur'ān, the word used is *arḥām* (literally, "wombs"), which refers to relatives to whom a person is linked by ties of womb and blood, whether they are his heirs or not.

### Islāmic view of kinship ties

Islām has recognized the ties of kinship in a way that is unparalleled in other religions or "isms"; it enjoins Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship and condemns the one who breaks this tie.

There is no greater proof of the emphasis placed by Islām on the ties of kinship than the vivid picture painted by the Prophet (ﷺ), who described kinship (*raḥm*) as standing in the vast arena of creation and seeking refuge with Allāh (ﷻ) from being cut off: Allāh (ﷻ) answers its prayer, taking care of those who maintain the ties of kinship, and cutting off those who cut off these ties. This is seen in the *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth narrated by Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) who said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Allāh (ﷻ) created the universe, and when He had finished, kinship (*raḥm*) stood up and said, "This is the standing up of one who seeks Your protection from being cut off." Allāh (ﷻ) said, "Yes, would it please you if I were to take care of those who take care of you and cut off those who cut you off?" It said, "Of course." Allāh (ﷻ) said, "Then your prayer is granted."'" Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Recite, if you wish: ﴾'Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief, in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom Allāh has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.'﴿ (Qur'ān 47:22-23)" and the Ḥadīth is narrated by: (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Many *āyāt* of the Qur'ān reiterate and affirm the position of *arḥām* in Islām, encouraging people to uphold the ties of kinship and instilling a strong sense of the importance of recognizing kinship rights and avoiding neglect of those rights, and warning against abuse of them. One of these *āyāt* is:

﴾...Fear Allāh, through Whom you demand your mutual [rights], and [reverence] the wombs [that bore you]...﴿ (Qur'ān 4:1)

This *āyah* commands man to fear Allāh (ﷻ) first and foremost, then places respect for *arḥām* second to

that of *taqwā* in order to emphasize its importance.

For the true Muslim, the fact that *raḥm* is often mentioned in conjunction with belief in Allāh (ﷻ) and good treatment of parents, is enough to confirm its status and importance:

﴾Your *Rabb* has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents...﴿ (Qur'ān 17:23)

﴾And render to the kindred their due rights, as [also] to those in want, and to the wayfarer: but squander not [your wealth] in the manner of a spendthrift.﴿ (Qur'ān 17:26)

﴾Worship Allāh, and join not any partners with Him; and do good — to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the wayfarer [you meet]...﴿ (Qur'ān 4:36)

Hence kind treatment of relatives comes one degree below kind treatment of parents on the scale of human relationships as defined by the Qur'ān; from there, kindness and respect extends to encompass all those needy members of the greater human family. This suits human nature, which is more inclined to start with kind treatment of those who are closer; it is also in harmony with the overall Islāmic system of social organization and mutual responsibility which starts with the family then is readily extended first to relatives and then to society at large, in a spirit of mercy and friendship which makes life more pleasant and beautiful for mankind.

Upholding the ties of kinship is one of the major principles of Islām, one of the fundamentals that this religion has promoted from the first day the Prophet (ﷺ) began to preach his message. It is one of the most characteristic features of Islāmic law. This is reflected in the lengthy coversation of Abū Sufyān with Heraclius. When the emperor asked Abū Sufyān, "What does your Prophet order you to do?" he answered, "He (ﷺ) tells us: 'Worship Allāh (ﷻ) alone and do not associate anything with Him. Give up the religion of your forefathers.' He tells us to pray, to give charity, to be chaste and to uphold the ties of kinship." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Upholding the ties of kinship is counted as one of the major characteristics of this religion, along with pure monotheistic belief in Allāh (ﷻ), establishing prayer, and adherence to truthfulness and chastity, which were being explained to those questioners for the very first time.

In the lengthy ḥadīth of 'Amr ibn 'Anbasah (رضي الله عنه) which includes many of the basic teachings of Islām, he said:

"I entered upon the Prophet (ﷺ) in Makkah (meaning at the beginning of his Prophethood), and asked him, 'What are you?' He said, 'A Prophet.' I asked, 'What is a Prophet?' He said, 'Allāh (ﷻ) has sent me.' I asked, 'With what has He sent you?' He said, 'He has sent me to uphold the ties of kinship, to break the idols and to teach that Allāh (ﷻ) is One and has no partner whatsoever..." (Muslim)

In this summary of the most important principles of Islām, the Prophet (ﷺ) clearly gave precedence to upholding the ties of kinship and mentioned it among the foremost features of the faith. This is indicative of its high status in the framework of this religion which Allāh (ﷻ) has revealed as a mercy to the Worlds.

The sources of Islām go to great lengths to encourage upholding the ties of kinship, and warn against cutting them off. Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (ﷺ) said:

"A man said, 'O Messenger of Allāh, tell me of a good deed that will grant me entrance to Paradise.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Worship Allāh (ﷻ) and do not associate anything with Him, establish regular prayer, pay *zakāh* and uphold the ties of kinship.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Upholding the ties of kinship appears in the same context as worshipping Allāh (ﷻ), believing in His absolute unity, establishing regular prayer and paying *zakāh*. Hence it is one of the best of righteous deeds that will guarantee Paradise and save one from Hell.

Anas (ﷺ) said:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Whoever would like his *rizq* (provision) to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

So it is a blessing for the one who upholds the ties of kinship, a blessing which affects both his *rizq* and his life: his wealth will increase and he will live a longer and more blessed life.

Ibn 'Umar used to say: "Whoever fears his *Rabb* and upholds the ties of kinship, his life will be extended, his wealth will increase and his family will love him more."[1]

As we have seen, upholding the ties of kinship brings blessing in a man's *rizq* and his life, mercy from Allāh (ﷻ) in this world and the next, and makes people love him and praise him. In contrast, breaking those ties will spell disaster and misery for him, earning him the dislike of Allāh (ﷻ) and the people, and keeping him far from Paradise in the Hereafter. It is misery and deprivation enough for such a man to hear the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"The person who breaks the ties of kinship will never enter Paradise." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Even worse for him is the news that his presence may deny mercy to his fellows, as in the ḥadīth quoted by al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*:

"Mercy will not descend upon a people among whom is one who breaks the ties of kinship."

Hence the great *ṣaḥābī* Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) never liked to make supplication to Allāh (ﷻ) in a gathering in which a person who had broken the ties of kinship was present, because that would prevent mercy from descending and the *du'ā'* from being answered. In one Thursday night gathering, he said: "I urge everyone who has broken the ties of kinship to get up and leave us." No-one got up until he had said this three times. Then a young man got up and went to see a (paternal) aunt of his whom he had forsaken for two years. When he entered, she said, "O son of my brother, what brings you here?" He said, "I heard Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) say such-and-such." She told him, "Go back to him and ask him why did you say that?" [Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ)] said: "I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: 'The deeds of the sons of Ādam are

[1] Narrated by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

shown to Allāh (ﷻ) every Thursday evening before *Jumu'ah*, and the deeds of one who breaks the ties of kinship are not accepted."[1]

The sensitive Muslim who is hoping to earn the pleasure of his *Rabb* and attain salvation in the Hereafter will be deeply shaken by the news given in these texts, that breaking the ties of kinship will cause mercy to be withheld from him and his *du'ā'* not to be answered. It will be a source of great misery to him to be in such a position, to do deeds which are of no avail, to seek the mercy of his *Rabb* and not receive it. It is unimaginable that a true Muslim would ever break the ties of kinship.

Breaking the ties of kinship is a sin which the Muslim whose heart is filled with true guidance and the desire to obey Allāh (ﷻ) and earn His pleasure will never commit, because it is one of the sins that Allāh (ﷻ) has said will bring punishment; indeed, it is one of the foremost sins for which Allāh (ﷻ) will punish the one who is guilty of them both in this world and the next, as is stated in the ḥadīth:

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad.*

"There is no worse sin for which Allāh (ﷻ) will hasten the punishment of one who is guilty of it in this world — in addition to what awaits him in the Hereafter — than breaking the ties of kinship and oppressing others." [1]

The acts of breaking the ties of kinship and oppressing others are very much like one another, so the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned them together in this ḥadīth. For breaking the ties of kinship is a kind of *zulm* (wrongdoing, oppression), and what *zulm* can be worse than breaking off relations with one's own kin and destroying ties of love and affection?

The Prophet (ﷺ) described the oppression that befalls the ties of kinship when they are cut off:

"The tie of kinship (*raḥm*) is a close-knit relationship that comes from Allāh (ﷻ), the Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*).[2] It says: 'O my *Rabb*, I have been oppressed, O my *Rabb*, I have been cut off...' He answers, 'Will you not be content if I cut off the one who cuts you off and take care of the one who takes care of you?'" (Bukhārī)

Allāh (ﷻ) raised the status of the tie of kinship and honoured it by deriving its name, *raḥm*, from one of His own names, *al-Raḥmān*. For He said:

"I am *al-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful), and I have created *raḥm* and derived its name from My name. Whoever takes care of it, I will take care of him, and whoever cuts it off, I will forsake him." [3]

This indicates to the sensitive Muslim that the one who upholds the ties of kinship properly will enjoy the cool shade of his *Rabb's* mercy, and the one who breaks those ties will be denied that shade, forsaken and abandoned.

## The Muslim upholds the ties of kinship according to the teachings of Islām

The true Muslim upholds the ties of kinship and does not let his worldly concerns, wealth, wife or children distract him from keeping in touch with his relatives, honouring them and helping them. In doing so, he is following Islāmic teaching, which regulates these relationships and ranks them in order of priority and degree of closeness, starting with the mother, then moving on to the father, then other relatives, from the most closely-related to others who are more distantly related. A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked, "O Messenger of Allāh, who is most deserving of my good company?" He (ﷺ) said, "Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father, then those who are most closely related to you." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Muslim earns two rewards when he treats his relatives with kindness and respect: one reward for maintaining the relationship, and another reward for giving charity. This gives him a greater incentive to give to his relatives, if they are in need. By doing so, he will earn two rewards from Allāh (ﷻ), and will

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2] The connection is clearer in Arabic, where *raḥm* and *al-Raḥmān* are derived from the same root. [Translator]

[3] A ḥadīth *qudsī* reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

also win the affection of his relatives. This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged Muslims to do, in the ḥadīth narrated by Zaynab al-Thaqafiyyah, the wife of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd (ﷺ), who said:

“The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘O women, give in charity even if it is some of your jewellery.’ She said, I went back to ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd and told him, ‘You are a man of little wealth, and the Prophet (ﷺ) has commanded us to give charity, so go and ask him whether it is permissible for me to give you charity. If it is, I will do so; if not, I will give charity to someone else.’ ‘Abdullah said, ‘No, you go and ask.’ So I went, and I found a woman of the Anṣār at the Prophet’s door, who also had the same question. We felt too shy to go in, out of respect, so Bilāl came out and we asked him, ‘Go and tell the Messenger of Allāh that there are two women at the door asking you: Is it permissible for them to give *ṣadaqah* to their husbands and the orphans in their care? But do not tell him who we are.’ So Bilāl went in and conveyed this message to the Prophet (ﷺ), who asked, ‘Who are they?’ Bilāl said, ‘One of the women of the Anṣār, and Zaynab.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, ‘Which Zaynab is it?’ Bilāl said, ‘The wife of Abdullah.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said, ‘They will have two rewards, the reward for upholding the relationship, and the reward for giving charity.’” (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to reaffirm the priority given to kind treatment of relatives at every opportunity. When the *āyah*: ﴿By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give [freely] of that which you love...﴾ (Qur’ān 3:92) was revealed, Abū Ṭalḥah went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “O Messenger of Allāh, Allāh (ﷻ) says: ﴿By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love...﴾ The most beloved of my properties is Bayrahā’ (a date orchard), which I now give up as *ṣadaqah* to Allāh (ﷻ), hoping to store up reward with Him. O Messenger of Allāh, dispose of it as you will.” The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Bravo! You have got the best deal for your property. I have heard what you said, and I think that you should divide it among your relatives.” Abū Ṭalḥah said, “I will do so, O Messenger of Allāh.” He divided it among his relatives and (paternal) cousins. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) looked far back into history and evoked ties of kinship going back centuries, when he enjoined good treatment of the people of Egypt, as is recorded in the ḥadīth narrated by Muslim:

“You will conquer Egypt, so when you conquer it, treat its people well, for they have protection (*dhimmah*) and the ties of kinship (*raḥm*).” Or he said: “... protection and the relationship by marriage (*ṣihr*).”

The *‘ulamā’* explained that *raḥm* here referred to Hajar the mother of Ismā‘īl, and *ṣihr* referred to Maryah, the mother of the Prophet’s son Ibrāhīm — both of who came from Egypt.

What a display of loyalty and faithfulness and good treatment, which extends to the kinsfolk and countrymen of these two noble women down throughout the ages! It is no surprise, then, that the true Muslim willingly recognizes the rights of his relatives and eagerly fulfils his duty of treating them kindly and maintaining the relationship.

## He maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives are not Muslim

The tolerance and humanity of Islām goes so far as to enjoin upholding the ties of kinship even if the relatives are not Muslim. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (ﷺ) said:

"I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) openly saying: 'The family of Abu So-and-so are not my friends, for my friends are Allāh (ﷻ) and the righteous believers. But they have ties of kinship with me, which I will recognize and uphold.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

When the *āyah*: ﴾And admonish your nearest kinsmen﴿ (Qur'ān 26:214) was revealed, the Prophet (ﷺ) summoned Quraysh. They gathered and he addressed them both in general and specific terms: "O Banū ‘Abdu Shams, O Banū Ka‘b ibn Lu'ayy, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū Murrah ibn Ka‘b, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū ‘Abdu Manāf, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū Hāshim, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib, save yourselves from the Fire. O Fāṭimah, save yourself from the Fire. I cannot do anything to protect you from the punishment of Allāh (ﷻ), but there are ties of kinship between us which I will recognize and uphold." (Muslim)

The Muslim's heart overflows with humane emotions which spill over into his good treatment of his relatives, even if they are not Muslim. The expression of the Prophet (ﷺ), "but there are ties of kinship between us which I will recognize and uphold (literally 'moisten')" is an example of Arabic eloquence, a metaphor in which the kinship tie (*raḥm*) is likened to the earth, and is "irrigated" by upholding it, so that it bears fruits of love and purity; if it is cut off, it becomes barren and produces only hatred and animosity. The true Muslim is on good terms with everyone and is liked by everyone, as they see good characteristics embodied in him.

Hence ‘Umar (ﷺ) did not see anything wrong with giving a garment that the Prophet (ﷺ) had sent to him to his half-brother (through his mother), who was a *mushrik*. (Bukhārī and Muslim)

We have already seen how Islām encourages us to treat our parents with kindness and respect, even if they are *mushrikīn*, and now we see how it encourages us to treat our relatives equally well, even if they are not Muslims either. This is an indication of the tolerance and humanity of Islām, which is not surprising when we remember the words of Allāh (ﷻ) to His Prophet: ﴾We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures﴿ (Qur'ān 21:107), and the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ): "Verily I have been sent to complete good behaviour and attitudes." (Malik, *al-Muwattā'*)

## He fully understands the meaning of upholding the ties of kinship

For the true Muslim, upholding the ties of kinship is one of the teachings of his faith. It is not just the matter of spending money — it goes much further than that. These ties are upheld by spending money on poorer relatives; and also by visits which reinforce the relationship, spreading mutual love and kindness; by advising and helping one another selflessly; by speaking kind words to relatives; by greeting them warmly with a smiling face and caring attitude; and by other good deeds which will fill hearts with love

and extend ties of mutual support among one's relatives. This was the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ) who urged Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship in even the simplest ways:

"Maintain your ties of kinship even if it is merely with a greeting (i.e. saying *al-salām 'alaykum*)" [1]

## He maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives fail to do so

The true Muslim maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives fail to do so, because the one who upholds this tie purely for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) and in adherence to the highest Islāmic teachings, does not expect to be treated equally well by his relatives in return. He always upholds the ties of kinship regardless of whether his relatives do so or not, to set an example in all his dealings with his relatives of the way Islām moulds people and makes them noble and decent. The Prophet (ﷺ) reinforced this meaning of the true Muslim when he said:

"The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship." (Bukhārī)

The Prophet (ﷺ) offered advice which serves to reinforce the attitude of kindness, patience, forgiveness and tolerance in the heart of the person who is trying to uphold the ties of kinship but receives only rejection and bad treatment in return. He stated that Allāh (ﷻ) is with whoever seeks to treat his relatives well but does not receive similar good treatment in return, and he painted a frightening picture of the sin which befalls those who deny good deeds and refuse to uphold the ties of kinship. A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: "O Messenger of Allāh, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off; I treat them well, but they abuse me; I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me." The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allāh (ﷻ) will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that." (Muslim)

See how Allāh (ﷻ) extends His support and help to the one who puts up with bad treatment from his relatives in response to his efforts to uphold his ties with them! Allāh (ﷻ) fills his heart with patience to bear their abuse and gives him strength to maintain his noble attitude. The Prophet (ﷺ) likens the sin which befalls those hard-hearted miscreants to the pain which befalls the one who eats hot dust, as a punishment for their abuse and mistreatment of this warm-hearted, generous person who only seeks to do what is right.

So the true Muslim upholds the ties of kinship in every case, always seeking to earn the pleasure of his *Rabb*, rising above the foolish insults and bad behaviour that occasionally occur among relatives, and refusing to become embroiled in the petty, trivial issues that occupy lesser minds and make people angry. The true Muslim knows better than to allow foolish, petty matters affect his relationship with and attitude towards his relatives. He remembers the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

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[1] Reported by al-Bazzār, from Ibn 'Abbās, with several *isnāds* that support one another.

"The tie of kinship (*raḥm*) is suspended from the throne of Allāh (ﷻ), and says: 'Whoever supports me, Allāh (ﷻ) will support him, and whoever cuts me off, Allāh (ﷻ) will cut him off.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

# Chapter 7

## *The Muslim and His Neighbours*

### He is the best of people in his dealings with his neighbours

The Muslim who is truly aware of the teachings of his religion is the best of people in his dealings with his neighbours, and the most respectful, kind and considerate towards them.

### He is aware of the Islāmic teachings concerning good treatment of neighbours

He is aware of the many Islāmic teachings concerning neighbours, and the high status given to them in the scale of human relationships, such as has never been equalled in any other religion or system before or since.

Allāh (ﷻ) has commanded the good treatment of neighbours in the Qur'ān:

﴾Worship Allāh, and join not any partners with Him; and do good — to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the wayfarer [you meet], and what your right hands possess...﴿ (Qur'ān 4:36)

The "neighbour who is near" is one with whom one shares ties of kinship or religion; the "neighbour who is a stranger" is one with whom one shares no such ties; and the "companion by your side" is a friend, colleague or travelling-companion.

Everyone whose home neighbours yours has the rights of a neighbour over you, even if you are not connected by kinship or religion. This honouring of the neighbour is an example of the tolerance promoted by Islām.

There are many ḥadīths of the Prophet (ﷺ) which enjoin good treatment of neighbours in general, regardless of kinship or religious factors, and confirm the importance of the neighbourly relationship in Islām. For example:

"Jibrīl kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to the extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

Islām gives such a high status to neighbours that when Jibrīl (عليه السلام) reiterated the importance of treating them well, the Prophet (ﷺ) thought that he would raise neighbours to the level of kinship and give them similar rights of inheritance.

The Prophet (ﷺ) followed Jibrīl's urging, and encouraged Muslims to honour neighbours and treat them well. In his historical *khuṭbah* during the Farewell Pilgrimage, in which he summarized the most important points of his teachings, he did not omit to mention neighbours and emphasized their rights to such an extent that the eminent *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Umāmah also thought that the Prophet (ﷺ) would make neighbours heirs:

"I heard the Prophet (ﷺ), when he was seated on his she-camel during the Farewell Pilgrimage, saying, 'I enjoin you to treat your neighbours well,' and urging their good treatment so much that I thought, he is going to give them the rights of inheritance."[1]

The good treatment of neighbours and avoiding harming or annoying them is so important that the Prophet (ﷺ) described it as one of the signs of true faith in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day:

"Whoever believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, let him treat his neighbour well; whoever believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; whoever believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, let him speak good or else remain silent." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

According to a report given by Bukhārī, he (ﷺ) said: "Whoever believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, let him not harm or annoy his neighbour..."

## The true Muslim is tolerant towards his neighbour

It comes as no surprise, then, that the Muslim who is truly guided by his faith is tolerant towards his neighbour, and is humble, easy-going and kind in his dealings with him. He does not stop him from using and enjoying his home, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"No-one should prevent his neighbour from fastening a piece of wood to his wall." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

## He likes for his neighbour what he likes for himself

The Muslim who is truly guided by his religion is soft-hearted and alert, and knows how to communicate well. He is sensitive towards his neighbour, sharing his joy and commiserating him in his sorrow. He likes for him what he likes for himself, following the teaching of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

In a report given by Muslim from Anas (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, no servant truly believes until he likes for his neighbour (or he said: his brother) what he likes for himself."

The true Muslim does not forget to take care of his neighbours who may be affected by the smell of cooking or barbecues coming from his house, which may provoke feelings of hunger, especially if they are poor and cannot afford much food. There may be small children, orphans, widows or elderly among

[1] Reported by al-Ṭabarānī with a *jayyid isnād*.

them. The true Muslim is always alert to the spirit of social responsibility which the Prophet (ﷺ) instilled in the Muslims in the words he spoke to Abū Dharr (ﷺ):

"O Abū Dharr (ﷺ), if you cook some broth, add extra water to it, and take care of your neighbour." (Muslim) According to another report he said, "If you cook some broth, add extra water to it, then think of the families in your neighbourhood and send some of it to them." (Muslim)

The Muslim's conscience will not let him ignore his neighbour's poverty and difficulty while he is living a life of ease and plenty. How can he bear to see the difference between himself and his neighbour, when the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) are ringing in his ears?

"He does not believe in me, who eats his fill while his neighbour beside him is hungry, and he knows about it" [1]

"He is not a believer, who eats his fill while his neighbour is hungry." [2]

## The misery that befalls humanity because of the lack of true Islāmic morals and manners

Hence we realize that the misery that has befallen humanity throughout the world has occurred because of the lack of true Muslims in positions of influence and authority, and because of the swamping of true Islāmic principles by backward, manmade systems, which have brought nothing but misery, poverty, exploitation, hunger and nakedness to so many, at the same time when mankind has conquered space, launched rockets and satellites, and put men on the moon. The international food and agriculture organization attached to the United Nations announced in 1975[3] that between 20-100 million people in Africa and Asia faced the possibility of death from starvation in the next few years, and that if the situation were allowed to continued, 3 million would be likely to die every week, while between 460-1,000 million people were suffering from malnutrition.

In the same year, news agencies reported the story of a young European woman who had volunteered to work as a nurse in some region of Africa where the people were suffering from chronic malnutrition. She had a severe mental breakdown that verged on insanity, after witnessing a bloody fight between some African children whose hunger drove them to compete savagely for a piece of mango. The fight did not stop until one child had plucked out the eye of another. None of the children concerned was any older than 8 years. This hunger has also caused many cases of total blindness, because of the constant lack of vitamins; children are so severely underweight that they look like skeletons. They have little or no resistance to illness, and are truly between the jaws of death.

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[1] Reported by al-Ṭabarānī and al-Bazzār, with a *ḥasan isnād.*

[2] Reported by al-Ṭabarānī and Abū Ya'lā; the men in its *isnād* are trustworthy (*thiqāt).*

[3] The Arabic edition of this book was first published in 1981. Needless to say, matters have hardly improved in the two decades since these statistics were produced. [Translator]

At a time when hunger is stalking Africa and Asia, we see the West, the rich nations who constitute only 20 % of the world's population but own 80 % of the world's wealth, going to insane lengths to hold on to this wealth. In 1975 Brazil burnt thousands of tonnes of coffee; the EEC (now known as the EU) spent $50 million to destroy surplus food and agricultural produce; and America pays its farmers $3,000 million annually for not growing anything — all to keep prices in the world's markets high! American farmers killed tens of thousands of calves, and buried them, to keep the price of meat high, when in the same year tens of thousands of people died of starvation in Africa, Asia and Latin America!

How great a difference there is between the humane culture of Islām, which does not let a poor man suffer because of the scent of cooking from a rich neighbour's house which may aggravate his hunger, and the materialistic culture of the West which is threatening millions of people with death from starvation. How miserable are those who are striving to adopt materialistic systems, whether Western or Eastern, stumbling blindly in the black night of *jāhiliyyah*. How great is the responsibility of the Muslims to be the bearers of the torch lit from a blessed tree, neither of the East nor of the West, which alone can dispel the darkness of *jāhiliyyah*, illuminate hearts and minds, and restore mankind to guidance, security and prosperity.

## The Muslim treats his neighbour in the best way he can

The Muslim who understands the teachings of his religion hastens to treat his neighbour in the best way he can. Nothing is too insignificant when it comes to respecting his neighbour, as some ignorant people think — they may think something is too small to be worth giving as a gift to a neighbour, so they refrain from giving it, thus depriving themselves and their neighbours of much goodness. This is something the Prophet (ﷺ) pointed out to women in particular, as many of them may feel too shy to offer a small gift to a neighbour:

"O Muslim women, do not think that any gift is too insignificant to give to a neighbour, even if it is only a sheep's foot." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

A sheep's foot is a thing of little value, but it is better than nothing, and no woman should feel that any gift is not worth giving to a neighbour. Allāh (ﷻ) says:

﴾Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!﴿ (Qur'ān 99:7)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Save yourself from the Fire even by giving half a date in charity." (Bukhārī)

But this ḥadīth, which is general in application, may also be taken to mean that the recipient should not look down on the gift. The meaning then is: No (female) neighbour should scorn the gift given to her by another (female) neighbour, even if it is it is just a sheep's foot. Rather, she should thank her for it, because gratitude engenders friendship among neighbours and encourages mutual support and help. This is in addition to the fact that thanking people for favours is a basic Islāmic trait which the Prophet (ﷺ)

strongly encouraged:

"The one who does not give thanks to people does not give thanks to Allāh (ﷻ)." [1]

## His generosity is directed towards both Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours

The true Muslim does not restrict his good treatment only to neighbours who are related to him or who are Muslims, but he extends it to non-Muslim neighbours too, so that the tolerance of Islām may spread to all people, regardless of their race or religion. The eminent *Ṣaḥābī* 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr had a sheep slaughtered and asked his slave, "Did you give some meat to our Jewish neighbour? For I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say, 'Jibrīl kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to the extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The People of the Book have lived among Muslims for centuries, knowing that they, their honour, their wealth and their beliefs are secure, and enjoying good neighbourly relations, good treatment and freedom of worship. Evidence of this is seen in the continued existence of their ancient churches, clinging to mountaintops, surrounded by thousands of Muslims who uphold the well-being of their Jewish and Christian neighbours in accordance with Qur'ānic teachings:

﴾Allāh forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for [your] Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allāh loves those who are just.﴿ (Qur'ān 60:8)

## He starts with the neighbour whose home is closest to his own

The true Muslim does not forget the precise system that Islām set out when it enjoined the good treatment of neighbours. Islām has told him to give priority to the one whose house is closest, then the one who is next closest, and so on. This takes into account the closeness of the neighbours whose homes are beside one another, the issues which may frequently arise between them and the importance of maintaining friendship and harmony.

'Ā'ishah said: "O Messenger of Allāh, I have two neighbours, so to which one should I send a gift?" He said, "To the one whose door is closer to yours." (Bukhārī)

The *Ṣaḥābah* were well-aware of this Islāmic teaching regarding the treatment of one's neighbours, so they would not attend to the good treatment of neighbours whose home was further away until they had taken care of the one whose home was nearer. Concerning this, Abū Hurayrah (ؓ) said: "He does not start with the neighbour whose home is further away before he takes care of the one whose home is nearer. He pays attention to the one whose home is nearer before he turns his attention to the one whose

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

home is further away."[1]

This system of priority in the good treatment of neighbours does not mean that a Muslim should ignore the neighbours who are further away from his home. Everyone around his home is considered to be a neighbour and thus enjoys the rights of a neighbour. This system is merely a matter of organization, by means of which the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged taking care of the closest neighbour because he is the one with whom there is usually ongoing contact and interaction.

## The true Muslim is the best neighbour

The attitude of treating neighbours well is deeply engrained in the Muslim's conscience and is one of the features that most distinguishes him in the sight of Allāh and of other people, because the true Muslim who has grown up in or been nurtured by Islām and has internalized its teachings, cannot but be the best of companions and the best of neighbours. He is the one described by the Prophet (ﷺ):

"The best of companions in the sight of Allāh (ﷻ) is the one who is best to his companion and the best of neighbours in the sight of Allāh (ﷻ) is the one who is best to his neighbour."[2]

So Islām counts a good neighbour, one whose presence is a source of comfort, security and safety, as one of the joys of a Muslim's life. The Prophet (ﷺ) honoured the good neighbour by describing him as one of the pillars of happiness in a Muslim's life:

"Among the things that bring happiness to a Muslim in this life are a righteous neighbour, a spacious house and a good steed."[3]

The *salaf* appreciated the value of good neighbours so much that they considered having a good neighbour to be a priceless blessing. One story which reflects this tells that the neighbour of Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ wanted to sell his home for 100,000 dirhams, and told the would-be purchaser, "This is the price of the house, but what would you give for having Sa'īd as a neighbour?" When Sa'īd heard about this, he sent his neighbour the price of the house and told him to stay there.

This is the status of neighbours in Islām, and the attitude and behaviour of a good Muslim neighbour. But what about bad neighbours?

## *Bad neighbours*

Having a bad neighbour is something which is so appalling that the sensitive Muslim cannot think of it without shuddering and being filled with a sense of fear, loathing and hatred.

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2] Reported by al-Tirmidhī with *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[3] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

## The bad neighbour is a person who is deprived of the blessing of faith

The bad neighbour is a person who is deprived of the blessing of faith, which is the greatest blessing that the Creator has bestowed upon His creation. The Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed the bad neighbour's loss of this great blessing in no uncertain terms when he said: "He is not a believer. He is not a believer. He is not a believer." The people asked, "Who, O Messenger of Allāh?" He said, "The one from whose evil (or troubles) his neighbour does not feel safe." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

In a report given by Muslim he (ﷺ) said:

"The one from whose evil his neighbour does not feel safe will not enter Paradise."

How great must be the crime of the bad neighbour, if his mistreatment of his neighbour is depriving him of the blessings of faith and denying him entrance to Paradise!

The true Muslim listens to these teachings with an open mind and accepts them. It never occurs to him that one day he may find himself in an argument or conflict with one of his neighbours, because that will destroy his faith and all hope of success in the Hereafter. This would be the greatest loss, and the mere thought of it makes the true Muslim tremble.

## The bad neighbour is a person whose good deeds are not accepted

Not surprisingly, several ḥadīth state that the bad neighbour is one whose good deeds are not accepted, and will be of no avail so long as he is mistreating his neighbour, because in Islām, good deeds are always centered on a foundation of faith, and as we have seen in the ḥadīth quoted above, the bad neighbour has no faith. So obviously his good deeds are not accepted: Allāh (ﷻ) rejects them outright, no matter how many good deeds he does, even if he spends all day and all night doing them.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked: "O Messenger of Allāh, such-and-such a woman spends her nights in prayer, fasts during the day, and so on, and she gives charity, but she offends her neighbours with her sharp tongue." The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Her good deeds will be of no avail: she is among the people of Hell." They said, "And so-and-so prays only the obligatory prayers, gives charity in the form of left-over curds, but does not offend anyone." The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "She is among the people of Paradise."[1]

The bad neighbour is one of the three worst types of people defined by the Prophet (ﷺ):

"There are three worst types of people: a ruler who, if you do well, does not appreciate it and if you do wrong, he does not forgive you for it; a bad neighbour who, if he sees something good, he conceals it,

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

and if he sees something bad he broadcasts it; and a wife who, when you are present, she annoys you and if you go away, she betrays you." [1]

Hence the smart Muslim will have a very clear picture of the bad neighbour, as described by the Prophet (ﷺ), and will keep a great distance from such a person.

## The true Muslim is careful to avoid falling into sin where his neighbour is concerned

The true Muslim is especially careful to avoid committing sins against his neighbour, because a sin against a neighbour is worse than other crimes, according to the words of the Prophet (ﷺ). He quizzed his Companions about adultery and they said, "It is *ḥarām*; Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger have prohibited it." He told them, "A man who commits adultery with ten women has committed a lesser sin than one who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife." Then he quizzed them about stealing, and they said, "It is *ḥarām*; Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger have prohibited it." He told them, "A man who steals from ten households has committed a lesser sin than the one who steals from his neighbour's house."[2]

The neighbour in Islām enjoys a unique sanctity which is unknown in other manmade laws and systems. Those manmade laws encourage the violation of a neighbour's honour because it is usually easier and there are more opportunities to do so than to violate the honour of others. These promiscuous songs about looking through the neighbour's window and such like did not become widespread in the Muslim world until we had forgotten the manners of chivalry and faith, and been overwhelmed by blind imitation and cultural and intellectual imperialism. Then cheap, dirty young men among us began to compose songs and poems about the female neighbour, when such a thing had never been known during our *jāhiliyyah*, let alone after the advent of Islām. One of our noble and decent poets, if he happened to see a female neighbour, would say:

"I lower my gaze when my female neighbour appears before me,/ until she disappears into her own home." [3]

Islām has encouraged this noble human attitude and behaviour in the many texts concerning the good treatment of one's neighbour, protecting his honour, concealing his faults, helping him when he is in need, lowering one's gaze from his womenfolk, and keeping away from everything that may harm him or make him suspicious. It is no surprise, then, that the true Muslim is the best neighbour that any human society has ever known.

The Muslim who is truly sensitive and aware of the teachings of his religion concerning the good treatment of neighbours, will be very cautious indeed concerning any dispute that may arise between

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[1] Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; the men of its *isnād* are *thiqāt*.

[2] Reported by Imām Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*. Its men are *thiqāt*.

[3] 'Antarah, in his *Dīwān* with footnotes by al-Mawlaw, p. 308.

himself and his neighbour for any reason, because of the warning of the Prophet (ﷺ) against arguing with neighbours:

"The first two antagonists on the Day of Judgement will be two neighbours." [1]

## His good treatment of his neighbour is not lacking

The true Muslim does not spare any effort to help his neighbour, opening wide the door of care, friendship and generosity. He is careful to fulfil his duty towards him lest the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) concerning the miserly, unhelpful neighbour become applicable to him:

"How many people will be hanging on to their neighbours on the Day of Resurrection, saying: 'O my *Rabb!* He shut his door in my face and denied me his kind treatment and help!'" [2]

What a miserable position the miserly, uncaring neighbour will be in on the Day of Judgement!

According to Islām, the Muslims are like a wall, whose bricks are the people of the Ummah. Each brick must be sound, and strongly bonded with the others, to make this wall sturdy and enduring; otherwise it will become weak and prone to collapse. Thus Islām surrounds this wall with strong spiritual ties, to preserve its integrity and strength, so that it will not be shaken no matter what events befall it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) gave a marvellous metaphor of the Muslims' solidarity and mutual support:

"The believers are like a wall whose bricks are fitted tightly together; each one of them supports another." (Bukhārī)

"The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body: if any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in pain." (Bukhārī)

If a religion places such an amazing emphasis on the solidarity of its followers, it is natural that it should strengthen neighbourly ties and base them on a solid foundation of friendship, kindness, mutual support and good treatment.

## He puts up with his neighbour's mistakes and bad treatment

The Muslim who is guided by Islām is patient with his neighbour and does not get angry or bear a grudge if he makes a mistake or has some shortcomings. He is tolerant and forgiving towards him, thus hoping to earn reward from Allāh (ﷻ) and to attain His love and pleasure. This is proven by the ḥadīth of Abū Dharr: when Muṭarrif ibn 'Abdullah met him, he said, "O Abū Dharr, I heard about what you said and I wanted to meet you." Abū Dharr said, "Your father was a great man! Now you have met me."

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[1] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī, with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

Muṭarrif said: "I heard that you have said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Allāh loves three and hates three.'" Abū Dharr said, "I do not think that I will tell lies about the Messenger of Allāh." Muṭarrif said, "Then who are the three whom Allāh (ﷻ) loves?" Abū Dharr (quoting the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "A man who fights for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), with perseverance and hoping for reward from Him, and fights until he is killed, and you find this in the Book of Allāh (ﷻ)." Then he recited: ﴾Truly Allāh loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure.﴿ (Qur'ān 61:4) Muṭarrif asked: "Then who?" He said, "A man who has a bad neighbour who annoys and disturbs him, but he bears it with patience and forbearance until Allāh (ﷻ) ends the matter either during his lifetime or upon the death of either of them."[1]

[1] Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

## He does not give tit-for-tat

One element of the teachings of this religion which the Prophet (ﷺ) explained to his Companions is not to repay a bad neighbour with bad deeds, but to bear his disturbance with patience, in so far as he is able, hoping that the one who is doing wrong may stop his bad behaviour when he sees that his neighbour is not responding in kind. This is one of the noblest characteristics and one of the most effective ways of uprooting the evil that exists in some souls.

Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Sallām (ؓ) came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “My neighbour is disturbing me.” He said, “Have patience.” He came back a second time and said, “My neighbour is disturbing me,” And the Prophet (ﷺ) again told him, “Have patience.” He came back a third time and said, “My neighbour is disturbing me.” The Prophet (ﷺ) told him: “Go back and put all your goods and chattels out in the street. If anyone comes along and asks you, tell him, ‘My neighbour is disturbing me.’ Then he will truly incur curses. Whoever believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, let him honour his neighbour...’” [1]

## He knows his neighbour’s rights over him

From the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding neighbours, the true Muslim knows the rights of his neighbour over him at all times. So he helps him at times of difficulty; he shares his joys and his sorrows; if he becomes poor he treats him kindly and helps him; if he is ill he visits him and consoles him; if he dies he follows his bier, comforts his family and takes care of them. He never forgets to consider the feelings of his neighbour and his family, and avoids doing anything that may hurt their feelings whether directly or indirectly.

These are the sublime Islāmic teachings concerning neighbours for every Muslim who has been guided to true Islām and who applies its rules to himself and to his family. Is it any wonder, in the light of all this, that the true Muslim should be the best neighbour that any human society has ever known?

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[1] *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/50.

# Chapter 8

## *The Muslim and His Friends and Brothers In Islām*

### He loves them for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)

One of the most prominent distinguishing features of the true Muslim is his love for his friends and brothers in faith, a love that is untainted by any worldly interests or ulterior motives. This is true brotherly love, whose purity is derived from the light of Islāmic guidance; its effect on the behaviour of Muslims is quite unique in the history of human relationships.

The bond that links a Muslim to his brother, regardless of race, colour or language, is the bond of faith in Allāh (ﷻ):

﴾The Believers are but a single brotherhood . . .﴿ (Qur'ān 49:10)

The brotherhood of faith is the strongest of bonds between hearts and minds. It comes as no surprise that this unique brotherhood bears fruits of love that are amazingly sublime, pure, deep and lasting. Islām calls it "love for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)," in which the true Muslim finds the sweetness of faith:

"There are three things that whoever attains them will find the sweetness of faith: if Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone else; if he loves a person solely for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ); and if he would hate to return to *kufr* after Allāh (ﷻ) has rescued him from it, as much as he would hate to be thrown into the Fire." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

### The status of two who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)

Many ḥadīth describe the status of two people who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), and describe the high position in Paradise which He has promised them and the great honour which He will bestow upon them on the Day when mankind is resurrected to meet the *Rabb* of the Worlds: Among them is the ḥadīth which describes the seven whom Allāh (ﷻ) will shade on the Day when there is no shade but His:

"...a just leader; a youth who grows up worshipping Allāh (ﷻ); a man who is deeply attached to the mosque; two men who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), meeting for His sake and parting for His

sake; a man who is called by a beautiful woman and says, 'I fear Allāh (ﷻ)'; a man who gives charity in secret such that his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing; and a man who remembers Allāh (ﷻ) when he is alone and his eyes fill with tears." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The two who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) are clearly shown to be among those whom Allāh (ﷻ) will shelter with His shade and upon whom He will shower His mercy and kindness. What a great honour! It is enough honour for those who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) that their Almighty *Rabb* will greet them on the Day of Resurrection and say to them: "Where are those who loved one another for My glory? Today I will shade them in My shade on the Day when there is no shade but Mine." (Muslim)

Such is the magnificent honour and tremendous reward that will be bestowed upon those who truly loved one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), on that awesome Day.

Love for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), and not for the sake of anything else in this life which is filled with greed, desires and interests, is very difficult, and none can attain it except the one who is pure of heart, for whom this world is as nothing compared to the pleasure of Allāh (ﷻ). It is not surprising that Allāh (ﷻ) should give them a status and blessing which is commensurate with their position in this world, above whose concerns they have risen. We find proof of this in the ḥadīth of Mu'ādh who said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Allāh (ﷻ) said: 'Those who love one another for My glory, will have *minbars* of light, and the Prophets and martyrs will wish that they had the same."[1]

Allāh (ﷻ) gives to those who love one another for His sake a gift which is even greater than this status and blessing: that is His precious love which is very difficult to attain. This is proven by the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"A man went to visit a brother of his in another village. Allāh (ﷻ) sent an angel to wait for him on the road. When the man came along, the angel asked him, 'Where do you intend to go?' He said, 'I am going to visit a brother of mine who lives in this village.' The angel asked, 'Have you done him any favour (for which you are now seeking repayment)?' He said, 'No. I just love him for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ).' The angel told him, 'I am a messenger to you from Allāh (ﷻ), sent to tell you that He loves you as you love your brother for His sake.'" (Muslim)

What a great love, that raises a man to a position where Allāh (ﷻ) loves him and is pleased with him!

The teaching of the Prophet (ﷺ) goes even further and states that the better of two brothers who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) is the one who loves his brother more. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"No two men love one another, but the better of them is the one whose love for his brother is greater."[2]

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

[2] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

Islām goes even further in spreading love in the rightly-guided Muslim society by telling the Muslim that if he loves his brother, he should tell him. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"If a man loves his brother, let him tell him that he loves him" [1]

The Prophet (ﷺ) understood the impact of this strong, pure love in building societies and nations, so he never let any occasion pass without advocating this love and commanding the Muslims to announce their love for one another, in order to open hearts and spread love and purity among the ranks of the Ummah.

Anas (ﷺ) said that a man was with the Prophet (ﷺ), when another man passed by. The first man said, "O Messenger of Allāh, indeed I truly love this man." The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him, "Have you let him know that?" He said, "No." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Tell him." He caught up with him and told him, "Truly I love you for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)," and the man said, "May Allāh (ﷻ) love you who loves me for His sake."[2]

Mu'ādh began to spread this pure love among the Muslims throughout the Muslim lands, telling them what he had heard from the Prophet (ﷺ) about the great reward that Allāh (ﷻ) had prepared for those who loved one another for His sake, and about His great love for them. In *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, Imām Mālik gives a report with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād* from Abū Idrīs al-Khūlānī who said: "I entered the mosque of Damascus, where I saw a young man who had a bright smile, and I saw the people gathered around him. When they disagreed on some matter, they referred it to him, and accepted his opinion. I asked who he was, and they told me, 'This is Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (ﷺ).' Early the next day, I went to the mosque but I found that he had arrived even earlier than I. He was praying, so I waited until he had finished, then I approached him from in front, greeted him and said, 'By Allāh (ﷻ) I love you.' He said, 'For the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)?' I said, 'For the sake of Allāh (ﷻ).' He repeated his question, 'For the sake of Allāh (ﷻ)?' and I said, 'For the sake of Allāh (ﷻ).' So he took hold of my collar and pulled me towards him and said, 'I have good news for you. I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: "Allāh (ﷻ) Almighty says: 'My love is granted to those who love one another for My sake, who visit one another for My sake, and who spend on one another for My sake.'"'"

## The effect of love for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) on the life of Muslims

In another ḥadīth, the Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed that this love between believers is one of the conditions of faith that will grant entrance to Paradise to the one who has it. In a report given by Imām Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ), the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

[2] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

"By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you of something that if you do it, you will love one another? Spread *salām* amongst yourselves." (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ), with the brilliant educational insight bestowed upon him by Allāh (ﷻ), understood that nothing could eliminate hatred, jealousy and rivalry from people's hearts but true brotherhood, based on love, friendship and mutual advice, and free of conspiracies, envy, sullenness and hatred. So he called for the Muslims to spread *salām* among their brothers, so that it would open their hearts to love and meeting one another on a good basis.

He frequently repeated this teaching to his *Ṣaḥābah*, hoping to sow the seed of love in their hearts and nurture it until it bore fruits of that great love that Islām wants for the Muslims. With this great love, the Prophet (ﷺ) built the first generation of Muslims which conveyed this divine Message to the world and formed the solid basis on which this religion was built.

Without this pure love, which Islām alone instilled in their hearts, the first Muslims would not have been able to persevere in jihād and make the great sacrifices through which they built the Islāmic state and spread the rule of Islām throughout the world.

With this amazing true love, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to establish the most ideal society of believers ever known, whose solidarity he described so well:

"The relationship between believers is like a wall, parts of which support other parts." (Muslim)

"The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body. If any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in pain." (Muslim)

"The Muslims are like one person: if his eye hurts him then his whole body will suffer, and if his head hurts him then his whole body will suffer." (Muslim)

In the light of this guidance, the Muslim cannot but be filled with love for his brothers and friends. Thus he becomes a good, constructive element of love in this world, and a victor who has gained the pleasure and love of his *Rabb* in the Hereafter.

## He does not forsake or abandon his brother

The true Muslim who understands the teachings of Islām knows that the religion that calls for love, continued contact and mutual affection, also is the religion that has forbidden brothers in faith to hate or abandon one another. Islām has explained that two people who truly love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) will not be separated by the first minor offence that either of them may commit, because the bond of love for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ) is too strong to be broken by such minor matters. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"No two people who love one another for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), or for the sake of Islām, will let the first

minor offence of either of them come between them."[1]

Islām does not ignore human nature; it recognizes that anger may strike in moments of weakness, but it puts a limit on the length of time that anger may prevail, and forbids Muslims to continue a dispute beyond this time without one or both of them bringing about a reconciliation. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"It is not permissible for a Muslim to be estranged from his brother for more than three days, both of them turning away from one another when they meet. The better of them is the one who is first to greet the other." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The true Muslim who has studied these definitive ḥadīths will not be able to bear having a dispute with his brother and being estranged from him, no matter what the reason. Rather, he will hasten to bring about a reconciliation, because the better of the two is the one who is first to give *salām*. If the other returns the greeting, both of them will have a share of the reward for the reconciliation, and if he does not return it, then the one who gave the greeting will be absolved of the sin of forsaking his brother while the one who refused to return the *salām* will have to bear the burden of that sin alone. This is made clear by the ḥadīth in which Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said:

"I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: 'It is not permissible for a man to be estranged from a believer for more than three days. If three days have passed, then he should go and give *salām* to him; if he returns the *salām* then both of them will have a share in the reward, and if he does not respond then the one who gave *salām* will be absolved of the sin of estrangement."[2]

The longer the estrangement lasts, the greater is the sin and the more severe is the punishment that will befall the two who are split by the dispute. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Whoever is estranged from his brother for a year, it is as if he has shed his blood."[3]

The Islāmic system of education is based on mutual love and affection, and ongoing contact. Therefore mutual hatred and envy should have no place in the life of the true Muslim. How could he allow such bad characteristics when he knows the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ) which enjoin morals and manners the like of which have never been known since man first walked on the face of the earth? The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"There should be no breaking off of ties, no turning away from one another, no hating one another, and no envying one another. Be brothers, as Allāh (ﷻ) has commanded you." (Muslim)

"Beware of suspicion, for speaking on the basis of suspicion is the worst kind of lie. Do not seek out one another's faults, do not spy on one another, do not compete with one another, do not envy one another, do not hate one another, and do not turn away from one another. O servants of Allāh (ﷻ), be brothers." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[3] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

"Do not envy one another, do not outbid one another (in order to inflate prices), do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another, and do not enter into a transaction when others have already entered into it. O servants of Allāh, be brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He does not oppress him, humiliate him or look down upon him. *Taqwā* is here" — and so saying, he pointed to his chest three times — "It is evil enough for a man to look down upon his Muslim brother. The whole of a Muslim's being is sacred to another Muslim — his blood, his wealth and his honour are inviolable." (Muslim)

The Muslim who thinks deeply about this teaching of the Prophet (ﷺ) which is filled with love, affection and brotherhood, will not be able to persist in his hatred unless there is some disease in his heart or some twistedness in his nature.

Therefore Islām issues a stern warning to those hard-hearted people who are deviating from true Islām and denying its spirit of tolerance by insisting on remaining estranged. They are risking an awful fate in the Hereafter: their actions may prevent them from attaining the mercy and forgiveness of Allāh (ﷻ), and may close the doors of Paradise to them. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The doors of Paradise are opened on Monday and Thursday, and every servant who does not associate anything with Allāh (ﷻ) will be forgiven, except for the man who bears a grudge against his brother. It will be said, 'Wait for these two until they reconcile, wait for these two until they reconcile, wait for these two until they reconcile." (Muslim)

The great *Ṣaḥābī* Abūl-Dardā' (رضي الله عنه) used to say: "Shall I not tell you about something that is better for you than charity and fasting? Reconcile between your brothers, for hatred diminishes reward."[1]

This is deep and penetrating insight, on the part of this *Ṣaḥābī* whose intelligence and good sense the Prophet (ﷺ) used to trust, into the spirit of this religion which is based on brotherhood and love. He understood that hatred cancels out good deeds and destroys rewards, so reconciling the estranged Muslim with his brother is better for him than charity and fasting, because if he were to continue bearing a grudge against his brother, this would negate any reward he might receive for those acts of worship.

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

## He is tolerant and forgiving towards them

If he becomes angry with his brother, the true Muslim restrains his anger and is quick to forgive him, and does not see any shame in doing so. Rather, he sees it as a good deed which will bring him closer to Allāh (ﷻ) and earn him His love which He bestows only on those who do good:

﴾...[those] who restrain anger and pardon [all] men — for Allāh loves those who do good.﴿ (Qur'ān 3:134)

A man may be able to restrain his anger, but resentment may be smouldering in his heart, and may turn into deep-rooted hatred. Open anger and rage are healthier than hidden resentment and malice.

The true Muslim whose soul has been saturated with this religion, does not harbour grudges; if he restrains his anger, he then follows that with forgiveness, and thus he will be among those who do good.

Anger is very difficult to restrain, for it is a heavy burden on the heart. But when a person forgives another, this heavy burden is lifted, freeing him, soothing him and bringing peace of mind. These are the feelings of *iḥsān* (goodness) which the Muslim feels when he forgives his brother.

The true Muslim is forgiving towards his brother, purely for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ). He hopes thereby to earn the honour to which the Prophet (ﷺ) referred in the ḥadīth:

"Allāh (ﷻ) will not increase His servant except in honour. No-one humbles himself for the sake of Allāh (ﷻ), but Allāh (ﷻ) will raise his status." (Muslim)

It is a great honour from Allāh (ﷻ), which combines with the good characteristics of the tolerant, forgiving Muslim, so that he becomes one of those who do good whom Allāh (ﷻ) loves, and one of those honoured ones whom people love.

Resentment has no place in the heart of the sensitive Muslim who truly understands his religion. He realizes the value of forgiveness and purity of heart, and their importance if he seeks Allāh's forgiveness, as the Prophet (ﷺ) explained:

"There are three sins, whoever dies free of these sins will be forgiven for anything else if Allāh (ﷻ) wills: associating anything with Allāh (ﷻ); practising magic or witchcraft; and bearing resentment towards his brother." [1]

## He meets them with a smiling face

The Muslim should always be pure of heart and cheerful of countenance. He should not meet his brothers except with warmth and smiles, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Do not think little of any good deed even if it is just greeting your brother with a cheerful countenance." (Muslim)

[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

Having a cheerful and friendly face is a good characteristic which Islām encourages and considers to be a good deed which will bring reward, because a cheerful face mirrors a pure soul. This inward and outward purity is one of the distinguishing features of the sincere Muslim. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Your smiling at your brother is an act of charity (*ṣadaqah*)." [1]

'Alī (رضي الله عنه) said: "When two Muslims meet and converse, Allāh (ﷻ) will forgive the one who has the most cheerful face."

It was the habit of the *Ṣaḥābah*, who were the living example of Islām, to shake hands whenever they met, and whenever they returned from a journey they would embrace one another. These actions increase the feelings of love and friendship between the two who meet. Ibn Sa'd reports in *al-Ṭabaqāt* (4/34) that al-Sha'bī said:

"When the Prophet (ﷺ) returned from Khaybar, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) came out to meet him, and the Prophet (ﷺ) embraced him and kissed his forehead, and said, 'I do not know which gives me more joy, Ja'far's return (from Abyssinia) or the conquest of Khaybar.'" Another report adds: "He embraced him warmly."

Islām encourages giving *salām*, and shaking hands and embracing whenever brothers meet, so as to reinforce the ties of love and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among believers, so that the Muslim society will be able to fulfil its purpose in life.

## He is sincere towards them

The true Muslim is sincere towards Allāh (ﷻ), His Book, His Prophet and to the leaders and the masses of the Muslims, as is stated in the ḥadīth:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Religion is sincerity[2].' We asked, 'To whom?' He said, 'To Allāh (ﷻ) (by obeying Him, attributing to Him what He deserves and performing jihād for His sake); to His Book (by reading it, understanding it and applying it to one's daily life); to His Prophet (by respecting him greatly and fighting on his behalf both in his lifetime and after his death, and by following his Sunnah); to the rulers of the Muslims (by helping them in their task of leading Muslims to the right path and alerting them if they are heedless); and to their common folk (by being merciful towards them)." (Bukhārī and Muslim)[3]

It is no surprise, then, that the Muslim should be sincere towards his brothers and not cheat them or mislead them. Sincerity, in this sense, is one of the most basic principles of Islām, which the first

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī who said it is *ḥasan gharīb*.

[2] *Naṣīḥah* is an Arabic word that may be translated by a number of words in English. The most common translation is "good advice," but it also carries connotations of sincerity, integrity and "doing justice to a person or situation." [Translator]

[3] The explanations in brackets are adapted from those given in the English translation of *ṣaḥīḥ* Bukhārī by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Vol. 1, p. 48). [Translator]

believers pledged to adhere to when they gave allegiance (*bay'ah*) to the Prophet (ﷺ). This is confirmed by the statement of Jarīr ibn 'Abdullah (ﷺ):

"I gave allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ) and pledged to observe regular prayer, to pay *zakāt* and to be sincere towards every Muslim." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

In the ḥadīth quoted above, we see that the Prophet (ﷺ) summed up Islām in one word, *naṣīḥah*, showing that sincerity is the central foundation of the faith. For without sincerity, a man's faith is invalid and his Islām is worthless. This is the meaning of the ḥadīth of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

This is impossible to achieve unless one loves one's brother with all sincerity. No doubt this level of love for one's brother is very difficult to attain, but it is not impossible as long as one is constantly aware that liking for one's brother what one likes for oneself is one of the conditions of faith, and that religion is sincerity. Indeed, it is a natural attitude of the sincere Muslim who truly understands Islām. Our history is filled with many examples, ancient and modern, of how true Muslims liked for their brothers what they liked for themselves. This reminds me of the stories I have heard from my elders about the traders in the markets of Syria. In the old covered *souqs*, traders dealing in one commodity would be grouped together, so there would be a *souq* for sellers of perfumes, another for dyers, a third for tailors, and so on. When a buyer came to one of them first and bought something, if a second buyer came — and his neighbour had not yet made a sale — he would politely tell the customer, "Go and buy from my neighbour, for I have made a sale, but he has not yet sold anything."

O Allāh (ﷻ)! How joyous and delightful life appears in the shade of this brotherhood and mutual affection! How happy life would be if it were infused with the spirit of Islām and if Islāmic values pervaded all its interactions. Then we would be living in a higher status that no man can achieve except in this religion which teaches him that "religion is sincerity" and that he does not truly believe until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself. On the basis of these lofty principles of love and sincerity, the great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) used to say:

"The believer is the mirror of his brother. If he sees any fault in him he corrects it." [1]

In these words, Abū Hurayrah (ﷺ) was echoing the ḥadīth of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"The believer is the mirror of his brother. The believer is the brother of a believer: he protects him from ruin and guards his back." [2]

It is natural that the true Muslim should have this noble attitude towards his brother. He could not do otherwise, even if he wanted to; the person who is living on such an exalted level cannot come down to the level of individualism and selfishness. A vessel will leak whatever is in it; a flower cannot but smell sweet, and good land cannot but bring forth good produce. The poet rightly said:

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*

"Does any plant produce large flowers but the washīj (plant with spear-like leaves)? /
Are palm trees planted anywhere except in the soil which is suitable for them?"

## He has a natural inclination towards kindness and faithfulness

Islām instills in its followers the characteristics of kindness and faithfulness towards one's friends: it even includes the parents' friends as we have already seen in Chapter 3 ("The Muslim and his parents"). Thus the true Muslim appreciates the value of faithfulness, and the value of the ties of brotherhood and friendship. The books of our Islāmic heritage are filled with great examples of kindness and faithfulness, which the *salaf* embodied in their daily lives so that they truly were ﴿the best of Peoples evolved for mankind.﴾

An example of this is the ḥadīth narrated by Muslim in his *ṣaḥīḥ* from Ibn 'Umar (ﷺ), in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend."

'Abdullah ibn Dīnār reported that he and 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (ﷺ) met a Bedouin man on the road to Makkah. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar greeted him, seated him on the donkey he was riding and gave him the turban he was wearing. Ibn Dīnār said: "We said to him, 'May Allāh (ﷻ) guide you! He is only a Bedouin and the least thing would satisfy them!' 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said, 'This man's father was a friend of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ﷺ), and I heard the Prophet say: "The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend."'"

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to nurture the souls of the Muslims and plant the seeds of faithfulness in them whenever he found an opportunity to tell them something of his guidance. A man of Banū Salamah came to him and asked: "O Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), is there any deed of kindness and respect that I can do for my parents after they die?" He said, "Yes, pray for them, ask forgiveness for them, fulfil their promises after they die, keep in contact with your relatives — for you have no relatives except through them — and respect their friends." [1]

The Prophet's concern for this kind of faithfulness in friendship was something that used to upset 'Ā'ishah, because he used to extend it to the friends of Khadījah, and 'Ā'ishah used to feel jealous of her. This is clear from the words of 'Ā'ishah:

"I never felt jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) as I did of Khadījah (ﷺ), although I had never seen her. But he used to mention her frequently, and sometimes he would slaughter a sheep, butcher the meat, and send it to Khadījah's friends. One time I said to him, 'It is as if there was no other woman in the world but Khadījah!' He said, 'She was such-and-such, and I had children by her.'" (Bukhārī and Muslim) According to another report: "he used to slaughter a sheep and send to her friends a goodly amount of it."

This incomparable Islāmic faithfulness extends even to the distant friends of deceased parents and wives! So what about our own close friends who are still alive?

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Ḥibbān in his *ṣaḥīḥ*.

One of the requirements of love, sincerity, kindness and faithfulness, according to Islām, is that a man should help his brother in all circumstances. If he is in the right, then he should help him by supporting him, standing by him, and defending him; if he is in the wrong, then he should help him by rebuking him, advising him and saving him from sinking into the mire of wrongdoing. This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) advocated in the ḥadīth:

"A man should help his brother whether he is a wrong-doer or is wronged. If he is a wrongdoer then he should stop him, and if he is wronged, then he should defend him." (Muslim)

The true Muslim does not forsake his brother, whether he is a wrongdoer or is wronged. Islām teaches him to like for his brother what he likes for himself: as long as he would not like for himself to be a wrongdoer or to do wrong, then he would not like this for his brother either. So if his brother is wronged, he stands by him, supports him and defends him, and if he is a wrongdoer he stands by him and stops him from doing wrong. This is indeed true sincerity and true kindness. These are two qualities that distinguish the true Muslim at any time and in any place.

## He is kind to his brothers

The true Muslim who is adhering to the teachings and values of his religion is kind to his brothers and is good-natured and easy-going towards them. In this, he is following the guidance of Islām, which encourages good characteristics.

Allāh (ﷻ) describes the believers as being ﴿...lowly [or humble] with the believers, mighty against the *kāfirūn*...﴾ (Qur'ān 5: 54). This suggests gentleness, modesty and good dealings with one's brothers in faith to an infinite degree of kindness, which is most akin to humility.

This message is reinforced by the teaching of the Prophet (ﷺ), which encourages the Muslim to be kind in a way that will add beauty to life. This is seen in the ḥadīth:

"There is no kindness in a thing but it adds beauty to it, and there is no absence of kindness but it disfigures a thing." (Muslim)

The Muslim sees a clear picture of the Prophet's character in his sīrah, which is full of kindness, gentleness, honour and good manners. He was never known to use obscene language or to curse or insult a Muslim. Anas (ﷺ), his servant and constant companion, describes his noble character thus:

"The Prophet (ﷺ) never used obscene language, or uttered curses and insults. If he wanted to rebuke someone, he would say, 'What is the matter with him, may his forehead be covered with dust![1]'" (Bukhārī)

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[1] It has been suggested that what is meant by this expression is "may his *sujūd* (prostration) increase," thus he would be guided and corrected. [Author]

## He does not gossip about them

The true Muslim does not gossip or backbite about his brothers and friends, or backbite against them. He knows that gossip is *ḥarām*, as the Qur'ān says:

﴾...Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it. But fear Allāh: for Allāh is Oft-Returning, All-Merciful.﴿ (Qur'ān 49:12)

The true Muslim who is infused with Islāmic teachings and manners will be horrified by the depiction given in the Qur'ān of one who gossips as being like one who eats the flesh of his dead brother. This will deter him from gossiping and, if he is guilty of this sin, he will hasten to repent sincerely, as indicated at the end of the *āyah* quoted. He will then restrain his tongue and speak only good of his brother, remembering the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"Do you know what gossip is? They said, "Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is your saying about your brother something which he dislikes." He was asked, "What do you think if what I say about my brother is true? He said, "If it is true then you have gossiped about him, and if it is not true then you have slandered him." (Muslim)

The true Muslim avoids the sin of gossiping directly or indirectly, abhorring the idea of being one who eats the flesh of his dead brother and fearing lest his tongue leads him to Hell. This is made clear by the Prophet's warning to Mu'ādh, when he took hold of his tongue and said, "Restrain this." Mu'ādh said, "O Prophet of Allāh, will we be responsible for what we say?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "May your mother be bereft of you! Is there anything that causes people to be thrown in Hell on their faces (or he said: on their noses) but the harvest of their tongues?"[1]

Gossip is a bad characteristic which does not befit a real man. Rather it is a feature of two-faced cowards who look like men, those who gossip to people about their brothers and friends, then when they meet them they smile warmly and make a display of friendship. Hence the true Muslim should be the furthest removed from gossip and fickleness, because Islām has taught him to be a real man, to be straightforward and to fear Allāh (ﷻ) in all his words and deeds. It has made him thoroughly despise hypocrisy and fickleness. The two-faced person is regarded as being one of the worst people in the sight of Allāh (ﷻ), as the Prophet (ﷺ) says:

"You will find among the worst people in the sight of Allāh (ﷻ) on the Day of Resurrection, the one who is two-faced, who approaches some people in one way and others in another." (Bukhārī, Muslim, *et al*)

The true Muslim is straightforward, never two-faced. He meets all people with a friendly, smiling face and does not differentiate between people in the face he presents to them. For he knows that being two-faced is the essence of hypocrisy and that hypocrisy and Islām do not go together. The two-faced person is a hypocrite, and the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell.

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[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

## He avoids arguing with them, making hurtful jokes and breaking promises

Among the good manners of the true Muslim are: he does not exhaust his brothers and friends with futile arguments, he does not annoy them with hurtful jokes, and he does not break a promise that he has made to them. In this way, he follows the guidance of the Prophet (ﷺ):

"Do not argue with your brother, do not joke excessively with him, do not make a promise to him then break it." [1]

This is because arguing does not bring any benefits; hurtful jokes often lead to hatred and loss of respect; and breaking promises upsets people and destroys love. The true Muslim should be above all of that.

## He is generous and prefers his brothers over himself

The true Muslim is generous, and spends freely on his brothers and friends. Naturally his brothers and friends should all be righteous believers, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Do not take for a friend anyone but a believer, and do not let anyone but a righteous person eat your food." [2]

The true Muslim understands where and when to be generous, and why. He does not waste his money or spend it on anyone but his righteous, believing brothers. He does not let himself become a milch-cow for worthless renegades as a means to protect himself from them or to earn their favour if they are in power. Those are people who do not hesitate to take advantage of simple-hearted, generous religious folk; you may see them eating at their tables whilst inwardly laughing at this simple-hearted, misplaced generosity.

The true Muslim is generous, but only when it is appropriate to be so. Generosity is a basic Islāmic characteristic that elevates the one who possesses it and endears him to people. This virtue was deeply rooted in the *Ṣaḥābah* (رضي الله عنهم), and was one of the dearest of righteous deeds to them. This is seen in the statement of 'Alī (رضي الله عنه):

"Having a small group of my brothers come and eat a little food with me is dearer to me than going out into your market to buy a slave and set him free." [3]

This kind of friendly gathering to share food strengthens the love between brothers and reinforces the spirit of human affection between friends. This is something which has been lost by modern, materialistic cultures, whose people now are concerned only for themselves and their own interests, and hence are

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2] Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[3] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

suffering from a sense of spiritual emptiness and emotional dryness. The result is a deep feeling of being deprived of sincere friendship and true friends. These people devote themselves to caring for their dogs, to make up for the lack of human emotional warmth drained from them by the materialistic philosophy which they have taken as a religion governing all apects of life. A French report states that there are seven million dogs in France, a country whose population is fifty two million. These dogs live with their owners like one of the family. It is no longer strange in French restaurants to see a dog and its owner eating together at the same table. When an official of the animal welfare organization in Paris was asked, "Why do the French treat their dogs like they treat themselves?" he answered, "because they want someone to love, but they cannot find any person to love."[1]

The materialistic man, whether in the West or in the East, can no longer find a true, sincere friend in his own society on whom to bestow his love and affection. So he turns to these animals in whom he finds more gentleness and faithfulness than in the people around him. Can man become any more emotionally degenerate than this extreme love for animals when he has lost the blessing of faith and guidance?

This emotional degeneration from which Westerners are suffering and which has dried up the human feelings in their souls, is one of the first things that attracted the attention of emigrant Arab writers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. They noticed that the materialistic lifestyle which has overtaken western societies has made men into machines who know nothing in life but work, productivity and fierce competition, who do not know what it is to smile warmly at a friend. They are overwhelmed by the haste and crowds of this machine-like existence. Seeing all of this alarmed those Arab writers, who had grown up in the Islāmic world and breathed its spirit of tolerance, and whose hearts were filled with brotherly love. So they began earnestly calling the Westerners towards the values of love and brotherhood. One of them was Nasīb ʻArīḍah, who raised the banner of this humane call to the Westerner whose heart was stained with materialism and who had been blinded and deafened by the roar of the machines: "O my friend, O my companion, O my colleague, my love for you is not out of curiosity or a desire to impose on you./ Answer me with the words 'O my brother!' O my friend, and repeat it, for these are the sweetest words./ If you wish to walk alone, or if you grow bored of me, / then go ahead, but you will hear my voice, calling 'O my brother,' bearing the message,/ and the echo of my love will reach you wherever you are, so you will understand its beauty and its glory."

The burden of materialistic life in the West became too much for Yūsuf Asʻad Ghānim to bear, and he could no longer stand this life which was full of problems and sinking in the ocean of materialism, and was devoid of the fresh air of spirituality, brotherhood and affection. So he began to long for the Arab countries of the Islāmic world, the lands of Prophethood and spirituality, the home of love, brotherhood and purity. He wished that he could live in an Arab tent, and leave behind the civilized world with all its noise and glaring lights: "If I were to live a short life in any Arab land, I would thank Allāh (ﷻ) for a short but rich life in a world where He is loved in the hearts of its people. I got so tired of the West that tiredness itself got bored of me. Take your cars and planes, and give me a camel and a horse. Take the Western world, land, sea and sky, and give me an Arab tent which I will pitch on one of the mountains of

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[1] Prof. Waḥīd al-Dīn Khān, *Wūjub taṭbīq al-sharīʻah al-islāmiyyah fi kulli zamān wa makān* ("The necessity of applying Islāmic Sharīʻah in every time and place"), in *al-Mujtamaʻ*, No. 325, Kuwait, 24 Dhu'l-Qiʻdah 1396/16 November 1976.

my homeland Lebanon, or on the banks of Bārādā or the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates, in the suburbs of 'Ammān, in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, in the unknown regions of Yemen, on the slopes of the Pyramids, in the oases of Libya... Give me an Arab tent, and I will weigh it against the entire world and emerge a winner..."

Many writings by emigrant Arab authors share the same tone, but it is sufficient to give just a few examples here. All of their writings express the emigrants' longing for the emotional richness that they missed when they came to the West, an experience which awoke in them feelings of longing for the East where Islām had spread love, brotherhood, mutual affection and solidarity.

Islām encourages its followers to meet their brothers and compete in generosity that will strengthen the ties of brotherhood among them, because generosity to one's brothers is viewed as a basic characteristic that is required of the Muslim. Islām made accepting a Muslim brother's invitation a duty in which he must not fail. The *Ṣaḥābah* used to accept their brother's invitations, because they saw this as their brother's right and their own duty; failing to do so would be a sin. This is seen in the ḥadīth narrated by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* from Ziyād ibn An'am al-Ifrīqī, who said:

"We were waging a campaign by sea at the time of Mu'awiya (ﷺ). Our ship came alongside the ship of Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (ﷺ). When it was time for lunch, we sent for him and he came to us and said, 'You called me while I was fasting, and I had no choice but to answer you, because I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say: "The Muslim has six duties towards his brother: he should greet him with *salām* when he meets him; accept his invitation; bless him[1] when he sneezes; visit him when he is sick; attend his funeral when he dies; and give him advice when he asks for it."'"

Indeed, the *Ṣaḥābah* thought that if a Muslim rejected his brother's invitation for no good reason, he was committing a sin against Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The worst of food is a meal which is cooked for guests, to which those who would come are not invited, whilst those who would reject it are. Whoever rejects an invitation with no good reason has disobeyed Allāh (ﷻ) and His Messenger." (Muslim)

The brotherhood of faith is not just the matter of empty slogans to be shouted. It is a sacred bond that has its own commitments, duties and rights. The one who truly believes in Allāh (ﷻ) and the Last Day, and who follows Islām, knows this, and does his best to fulfil the duties of Islām. We see evidence of that faith and devotion to Islāmic duty in the deeds of the Anṣār who set the highest example of selfless love towards their Muhājir brothers who had emigrated for the sake of their religion and arrived in Madīnah possessing nothing. The Anṣār offered them everything, to the extent that one of them told his Muhājir brother: "This is my wealth: take half of it. And these are my two wives: see which one is more pleasing to you and tell me, so I will divorce her and she can become your wife after she has completed her *'iddah*." The Muhājir responded to his brother's kindness and affection with something even better. He told him: "May Allāh (ﷻ) bless your wealth and your wives for you. I have no need of them. Just show me where the market is so that I can work."

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[1] By saying "*yarḥamuk Allāh*" (may Allāh have mercy on you). [Translator]

An Anṣārī welcomed his Muhājir brother as a guest when he had no food in his home except what was just enough for his children, but he preferred his brother over himself and his family, so he told his wife, "Put your sons to bed and extinguish the lamp, then offer what you have to our guest. We will sit with him at the table, and make him think that we are eating, but we will not eat." So they sat at the table, and the guest alone ate, while the couple stayed hungry all night. The next morning, the Anṣārī went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and told him what had happened. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Allāh (ﷻ) is pleased with what you have done for your guest this night." (Bukhārī and Muslim)

The selfless attitude of the Anṣār towards the Muhājirīn and their willingness to support them with their wealth reached such an extent that they asked the Prophet (ﷺ): "Divide the date-palms between us and our brothers." He said, "No." So they said to the Muhājirīn, "Help us to tend the trees, and we will share the crop with you." The Muhājirīn said, "To hear is to obey." (Bukhārī)

The Muhājirīn greatly appreciated the good deeds of their Anṣār brothers, and told the Prophet (ﷺ): "O Messenger of Allāh, we have never seen anything like this people to whom we have come: if they have a little, they are still willing to help, and if they have plenty, they are most generous. They have supported us and shared their wealth with us, so much so that we feared that they would receive all the reward." The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "No, not so long as you praise them and pray to Allāh (ﷻ) for them."[1]

It was sufficient for the Anṣār that Allāh (ﷻ) praised them and commended their good deeds. He revealed an *āyah* of the Qur'ān which would be recited, and the story of their unique selflessness would be told, for all time, and would serve as a realistic and vivid example of how people can break free from selfish greed:

﴾But those who before them, had homes [in Madīnah] and had adopted the Faith — show their affection to such as had come to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the [latter], but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their [own lot]. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls — they are the ones that achieve prosperity.﴿ (Qur'ān 59:9)

Whenever people are called upon to make sacrifices and be generous, this Qur'ānic description of the Anṣār will remain forever a beacon of guidance and a shining example to mankind who is lost in greed and covetousness.

The Anṣār understood the meaning of the brotherhood of faith when the Prophet (ﷺ) established the ties of brotherhood between them and the Muhājirīn. They were true believers who liked for their brothers what they liked for themselves, as they had learned from the Prophet (ﷺ). They did not withhold any of their worldly goods from their brothers, but they willingly offered them half of what they possessed. At the beginning of the hijrah, they made the Muhājirīn their heirs, to the exclusion of their own relatives, in order to fulfil the duties of brotherhood which the Prophet (ﷺ) had taught them. This is seen in the report narrated by Bukhārī from Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه), who said:

"When the Muhājirīn came to Madīnah, a Muhājir would inherit from an Anṣārī to the exclusion of his own relatives. When the āyah: ﴾'. . . But kindred of blood have prior rights against each other . . .'﴿

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nisā'ī. Its *isnād* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

(Qur'ān 8:75) was revealed, this inheritance was abrogated, but the duties of support, help, selflessness and beneficence remained."

## He prays for his brothers in their absence

The sincere Muslim who truly likes for his brother that which he likes for himself does not forget to pray for his brother in his absence, which is a practical demonstration of his brotherly love and care. He knows that this is the prayer which is most quickly answered, because it is characterized by sincerity and purity. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The quickest prayer to be answered is a man's supplication for his brother in his absence."[1]

Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) asked 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) to pray for him, when 'Umar came and sought permission to perform 'Umrah. 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) said:

"I asked the Prophet (ﷺ) for permission to perform 'Umrah. He gave me permission and said: 'Do not forget us in your prayers.' He told me something that meant more to me than the whole world."[2]

The *Ṣaḥābah* understood this and used to ask their brothers to pray for them whenever they were in a situation where their prayers would be answered. Men and women alike shared this virtue, which is indicative of the high level of the entire society during that golden period of our history. Bukhārī reports, in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, from Ṣafwān ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ṣafwān, whose wife was al-Dardā' bint Abūl-Dardā'. He said: "I came to visit them in Damascus; I found Umm al-Dardā' in the house, but Abūl-Dardā' was not there. She said, 'Do you want to go to Ḥajj?' I said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Pray for me, for the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say, "The Muslim's prayer for his absent brother will be answered. There is an angel at his head who, whenever he prays for his brother, says *'Āmīn*, and you shall have likewise."''" He (Ṣafwān) said, "I met Abūl-Dardā' in the market and he told me something similar, reporting from the Prophet (ﷺ)."

The Prophet (ﷺ) taught his *Ṣaḥābah* team spirit and the importance of caring for others. At every opportunity he would direct them towards a true understanding of brotherhood, so that there would be no room for the selfish individualism which makes eyes blind and seals hearts.

An example of the way the Prophet (ﷺ) instilled the spirit of brotherhood in people's hearts and removed the seeds of selfishness is his words to the man who prayed, "O Allāh (ﷻ), forgive me and Muhammad only." He told him, "You have denied it to many people." Thus he taught him that Islām forbids a Muslim to seek good only for himself, even if the Prophet (ﷺ) is included in that. The believer must love for his brother what he loves for himself.

Such is the true Muslim, who loves for his brother what he loves for himself: he is sincere towards his brothers; he safeguards their reputation, honour and wealth both in their presence and in their absence; he

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[1] Reported by Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

[2] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ* ḥadīth.

prefers them to himself; he is tolerant and forgiving of their faults and mistakes; he is gentle, kind and humble towards them; he is decent in his dealings with them, in word and deed. He is generous, not miserly; truthful, not a liar; friendly, not hostile. He is reliable and trustworthy and does not betray them; he is straightforward, not two-faced. It is no wonder that the true Muslim is like this, for this is the miracle that Islām has wrought in men's characters. This is the Muslim as Islām meant him to be.